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Success of Food Assistance Programs: Metrics to Evaluate Provision of Healthy Food Products Across Burlington, Vermont.

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Success of Food Assistance Programs: Metrics to Evaluate Provision of Healthy Food Products
Across Burlington, Vermont.

Meghan Conway

University of Vermont

Abstract

Food insecurity is a widespread issue that has left millions of people dependent on food assistance programs. The lack of access to a healthy diet puts people at risk of instability regarding their level of hunger and quality of life. Food assistance programs aim to alleviate the various stressors and risks associated with food insecurity. The high level of dependency among food insecure populations on food assistance programs makes it essential that the programs that serve as immediate relievers of the discomforts associated with food insecurity, specifically emergency food assistance programs, are effective and provide an adequate provision of healthful and fulfilling foods. In order to ensure this type of success, it is crucial that accurate and reliable metrics are identified and utilized to measure the success of emergency food assistance programs.

In an effort to analyze and evaluate the current condition of emergency food assistance programs in the Burlington area, it is important to elicit and assess the current metrics used within the system to measure its success. In doing so, this thesis had the following objectives. First, identify and assess the accuracy of food assistance program indicators as explored through the literature and reported by organization staff. Second, examine which metrics are most accurate in evaluating the success of such programs in providing community access to healthful food throughout Burlington, Vermont. The provision of healthy food is an important and intrinsic focus to this project. Food insecure individuals, households and populations are set at a much greater risk of negative health externalities due to their lack of access to nutritious food. This, combined with the dependency on emergency food assistance programs, elicits a clear depiction of the importance behind evaluating metrics of success within this system. Without the immediate provision of healthy food to those who depend on the emergency food assistance model, food insecure populations are put at a greater vulnerability. Accurate evaluation of success among these programs by way of qualitative data collection is essential. The true experiences of those who participate in and benefit from such food assistance programs is a key source of furthering our understanding of how emergency food assistance programs achieve their goal of alleviating food insecurity. This study hopes to contribute to the improvement of community assessments of food assistance programs in Burlington, Vermont, as an aim to find better alleviation tactics.

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I would also like to thank the staff members of both the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program as well as the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf who agreed to be interviewed for this project. The work that they do on a daily basis has helped better the lives of those who are struggling within our community is truly amazing. Their work has helped immensely in developing my own understanding of the importance of emergency food assistance programs and the far reaching impact they can have on a community.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the participants of these two programs who agreed to assist in this project. Their willingness to share their experiences has given me valuable insight into what is necessary among these programs in order for them to be successful. It is these people who make our community so vibrant, and it is our duty in return to help them feel comfortable and live a better life.

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Introduction

The main focus of this project is to address the success of local efforts in increasing food security, defined as “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO,1996). Today, approximately 14.3% of American households are food insecure (Farm to Plate, 2015). This means that a significant portion of the country is suffering from increased vulnerability to the varying health, social and economic impacts that are associated with being food insecure. Without sufficient access to nutritionally adequate foods, households across the country are forced into a position associated with an increased risk of hunger as well as a lower quality of life. When a household is food insecure, there is an array of harmful sacrifices that have to be made in order to ensure that food makes it to the table on a daily basis. Though there are federally funded assistance programs that seek to address nationwide food insecurity and serve as umbrella assistance programs, these benefits frequently come up short in terms of households having access to what is needed daily. To combat this, emergency food assistance programs have been developed with the aim of serving as a safety net that ensures food insecure households are provided with the resources they need. The general goal of any emergency food assistance program is to provide instant relief to food insecure households in their most desperate times of need. The impact of street-level organizations such as these allow food insecure households to provide food for their families at a rate that will adequately fill the gaps federal assistance cannot.

Emergency food assistance programs are an intrinsic part of food insecurity alleviation, as they give at-risk populations an opportunity to reduce their vulnerability and risk of the various health impacts as well as social and economic burdens that are associated with food insecurity. Without emergency food assistance programs, food insecure populations would have a lack of access to adequate, nutritionally appropriate food that would leave them in a position susceptible to various economic and social barriers throughout the local community that directly harm their ability to live a stable life. Unfortunately, this is a reality for a large portion of the Vermont population. Among all 50 states, Vermont ranks number 34 for prevalence of food security, with 13.2 percent of the population being food insecure (Schattman 2015). As a leader in environmental stewardship and a model for localized food systems, Vermont is especially unique in the sense that its local emergency food assistance programs have access to a wide

network of agriculturally based initiatives that focus on the provision of healthy food products. The sense of community that arises from Vermont's network of agriculturally based food assistance initiatives enables food insecure households to reduce their vulnerability to the social and economic impacts of such insecurity while gaining increased access to a nutritionally appropriate diet. Because of this unique position, it is important there are identified metrics that can be utilized by such organizations in order to ensure that they are adequately achieving their goals of alleviating local food insecurity, and connecting at-risk populations with the local food system in a way that will have the most positive impact on their quality of life.

In approaching this research topic and process, it is important to cultivate a general understanding of what food insecurity looks like throughout the country as well as throughout the state of Vermont. In doing so, the intensity of Vermont's food insecurity can be clearly established. This will help in setting a foundational expectation for the type of work local food assistance programs should be pursuing in Burlington in order to properly address the population's vulnerability. Furthermore, it is important to have a baseline understanding of the goals and structure of federal food assistance programs in order to cultivate a broad understanding of why emergency food assistance is essential to food insecurity alleviation efforts. Identifying the primary goals of emergency food assistance programs as well as the reliance of such programs across the country is essential to understanding how successful the programs established throughout Burlington are in addressing the needs and vulnerabilities of at-risk populations.

The goal of this thesis was to explore and evaluate the current metrics used to measure the success of emergency food assistance programs throughout the Burlington area. In doing so, I hope to elicit both what is working and what is missing in the structure of our current emergency food assistance system. My hope is that this process and its results will serve as a valuable resource to both programs that can potentially facilitate a discussion surrounding what changes and/or improvements could be made to program structure and functionality in order to better accommodate and solve for the needs of program clients.

1. Previous Work

1.1 Food Security in the United States

A. Defining Food Insecurity

Today, food insecurity poses as a huge threat to human welfare in the United States. To be food secure means that “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 1996). Food insecurity, on the other hand, can be defined differently across varying household and community demographics. It is important to address that food security and insecurity looks different and means something different for people and populations across varying demographics. To make assumptions about food insecure populations as a whole would be illogical, as everyone’s level of stability comes from a different and unique experience and circumstance. Generally, Food insecurity throughout the United States is assessed using three standard pillars: availability, access and utilization (Barrett, 2010). Availability most prominently concerns the quantity and quality of nutritious and safe food products available to an individual or household. Access is relative to how much food a family or household can obtain based on their level of demand. Utilization most directly refers to the ability of a household or individual to properly use the food to which they have access to (Barrett, 2010). Failure to attain any one of these three pillars leaves a household or individual, by definition, food insecure.

The intensity of food security exists on a spectrum consisting of high food security, marginal food security, low food security, and very low food security (USDA, 2018; Cafiero, Gunderson, 2018; Ziliak, 2015). Each level of food security has a specific definition that is used to summarize household survey responses to 18 questions put out by the USDA (USDA, 2018). This series of questions are one of the most frequently used measurements to determine levels of food insecurity across households and individuals (USDA, 2018). In general, results that qualify as “high food security” define cases in which all household members have access to enough food for an active, healthy life at all times. Marginal food security is defined by cases in which households had occasional times or anxieties about accessing enough food of the right quality, variety and quantity. Low food security is defined by scenarios when at least a portion of household members are uncertain of having or are unable to attain enough food due to lack of money and/or other resources for food. Very low food security is defined on the lines of hunger, distinguishing times when one or more member(s) of the household were hungry because they

did not have the economic stability to access available food to serve the various needs of the household (USDA, 2018; Gunderson, 2018). Though these are the broadest categories of which food security levels are defined, other methods such as FAO estimates of undernourishment, survey-based indicators, dietary diversity scores, food consumption levels, and experience-based food insecurity scales are also current metrics used to determine levels of food security (Cafiero, 2014). Though these measurements may supply quantifiable levels of food security, the literature shows a clear gap regarding quantifiable metrics of measurement based on experience. Current research regarding food security highlights the benefits of survey and experience-based data collection as an important tool to analyze the experiences and opinions of those who are food insecure (Barret, 2010). This type of data collection is important, as it addresses the social and cultural factors that have a tangible impact on food security throughout the country (Barret, 2010). There is a diverse set of factors that affect the level of food security, all of which are dependent on varying demographics across the country. Establishing a way to accurately measure the ability of emergency food assistance programs to address these factors is essential in further improving such efforts.

Food security can be measured relative to both individual and household levels. Specifically, household food insecurity is a determinant of welfare and is most commonly referenced throughout the literature when discussing food insecurity throughout the United States (Pinstrip-Anderson, 2009). In order for a household to be considered food secure, it must have the obvious ability to acquire all of the food needed for each member of the household (Pinstrip-Anderson, 2009). Factors that most commonly lead to household food insecurity include loss of income and loss of food-related income such as government assistance (Hoisington, 2002). Unfortunately, being food insecure at any level increases human vulnerability, which leads to a decrease in well-being. With food insecurity comes numerous economic, human health and social ramifications that directly threaten the stability and quality of life of those who suffer. Food insecure households are often forced to make choices and prioritizations that sacrifice other essential needs. Failure to address needs relative to human health, economic stability and social integration put households in a vulnerable position. These decisions increase the risk of complications associated to human health via hunger and undernourishment, economic stability relative to income and access, and social outcomes relative

to community integration and stigma. (Cafiero, 2014; Barrett, 2010; Pinstруп-Anderson, 2009; Cook, 2008; Connell, 2005).

B. Prevalence and Effects of Food Insecurity in the United States

As of 2016, 12.3% of households in the United States were food insecure, which equates to 15.6 million people (Coleman-Jenson, 2017). This leaves a huge portion of the country's population suffering the various human health, economic and social ramifications that are associated with being food insecure. There are common behavioral shifts in children and adults that can be results of food insecurity. Most prominently, various sacrifices need to be made by heads of households in order to help eliminate the risk of children and other family members not receiving proper amounts of food. These sacrifices are referred to throughout the literature as coping strategies (Gunderson, 2018; Connell, 2005; Hoisington, 2002). Household surveys and interviews reveal that as food availability becomes scarcer, people are forced to use more desperate coping strategies that ultimately put the well-being of the individual and household at risk (Hoisington, 2002). The most commonly used coping strategies involve choices such as stretching foods, using stores, sales and discount coupons to buy certain foods, substituting foods for a less nutritious option, and reducing ingredients considered to be unaffordable (Hoisington, 2002). These types of substitutions and various strategies force food insecure families to seek further sources of food such as emergency foods and shared meals, which subsequently causes them to prioritize food availability over food quality (Hoisington, 2002). Parents of food insecure households are frequently forced to make difficult decisions regarding prioritization of nutrition quality and food quantity, resorting to canned foods and other low-cost foods as well as eating less food in order to ensure food availability for children (Cook, 2008; Connell, 2005; Hoisington, 2002). The effects of household food insecurity affect every member of the household in some way, leaving their vulnerability to health consequences much higher than food secure households (Cafiero, 2014; Barrett, 2010; Pinstруп-Anderson, 2009; Cook, 2008; Connell, 2005).

The pressures of being food insecure can force households to make decisions regarding their food choices that directly threaten their health. Where this prominently becomes an issue is where it intersects with child health. Unfortunately, food insecurity puts children at an increased risk of various health complications (Gunderson, 2018; Ziliak, 2015). Interviews with children suffering from household food insecurity indicate having to submit to various eating behaviors

such as eating less at meals, losing weight due to lack of food, relying on school meals, and eating foods that were not preferred (Connell, 2005). These types of consumption behaviors have adverse health effects on children. Trends assessing food security and child health reveal that children who are food insecure are at a higher risk of health issues such as anemia, low nutrient intakes, aggression and anxiety, asthma, behavioral problems, depression, and generally poorer overall health (Gunderson, 2018; Ziliak, 2015). The influence that food insecurity has on health and development through its prioritization of quantity over quality based factors such as nutrition puts households in a states of stress in which they have no choice but to sacrifice the health status of their home in order to avoid hunger (Ziliak, 2015; Cook, 2008; Connell, 2005).

C. Indicators of Populations at Risk of Food Insecurity

There are various indicators across the social and economic spectrum that can help in predicting whether or not a household or individual is food secure or insecure. Though it is difficult to broadly apply a specific set of determinants to each unique demographic throughout the country, there are specific trends in demographic characteristics that correspond with food insecurity. One of the most prominent indicators of food insecurity is that of financial stability (Gunderson, 2018; Ziliak, 2015; Cook, 2008). Households that have lower incomes are at a higher risk of becoming food insecure (Gunderson, 2018; Ziliak, 2015). It is important to note that, though this may be a common trend of food insecurity indicators, being at risk of food insecurity is not limited to those below the federal poverty line (Cook, 2008). Many of the food insecurity indicators are related to household characteristics. Correlations between who is head of the household and the family dynamics of the households with food insecurity levels have been identified throughout the literature (Gunderson, 2018; Ziliak, 2015).

Frequently observed household characteristics that increase risk and likelihood of food insecurity include income level, race and ethnicity, marital status, home ownership, regional demographics, age, employment and number of children (Gunderson 2018; Myers, 2017; Ziliak, 2015; Gunderson, 2009). It is found across studies related to demographics and food insecurity levels that households that live at or below the poverty line have a greater likelihood of being food insecure; as do households headed by African American or Hispanic American individuals, single parents, divorced individuals, renters, houses with multiple children, are unemployed, and are younger (Gunderson 2018; Myers, 2017; Ziliak, 2015; Edelman, 2009). These characteristics have been identified as what will best ensure either a strong or weak response to various

economic shocks that a household can endure that would directly affect their food security level and general quality of life (Gunderson, 2018). Indicators such as these are important to consider when looking at the prominence of food security throughout the country, as those of who show signs of such indicators have a smaller chance of having the capability to protect themselves from the threat of food insecurity.

Food insecurity is one of the most prominent threats to quality of life across the country. The extensive range of who is vulnerable to being food insecure and the various effects it has on human health, economic stability and social welfare calls for major assistance efforts.

1.2 Food Assistance Programs in the United States

A. Federal Food Assistance Programs

With the rise in food insecurity throughout the country has come a subsequent rise in reliance on food assistance programs (Gunderson, 2017; Lentz, 2013; Greger, 2002). The United States has various private and public food assistance programs that aim to increase the quality and quantity of food provided to and consumed by food insecure households in a manner that simultaneously improves both nutrition and health (Lentz, 2013). The USDA federally funds 15 food assistance programs throughout the country, the five most prominent of these include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), and emergency food assistance (USDA, 2018; USDA, 2017; Morgan, 2015; White House Council on Economic Advisers, 2015; Melean, 2014). In terms of private assistance programs, SNAP, NSLP, WIC and SBP are the most commonly used, USDA funded food assistance programs throughout the country by food insecure populations (Morgan, 2015). Within a single year, approximately one in four Americans participate in one of the USDA's domestic food and nutrition assistance programs (Morgan, 2015). Though the primary focus of this project is the emergency food assistance sector, it is important to highlight the purpose and utilization rates of the four largest private assistance programs.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, (SNAP), is the largest of all the federally funded food and nutrition programs throughout the country (WHCEA, 2015). The goal of the program is to alleviate food insecurity and general hunger through supplementing the food budgets of low-income households, most prominently recognized through the use of food

stamps. (WHCEA, 2015). As of 2014, SNAP benefitted approximately 4.7 million people, lifting them out of both poverty and hunger (WHCEA, 2015).

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP), is classified as a federally assisted meal program in which both public and private schools provide lunches every day that are nutritionally balanced and low or no-cost to students. In 2016 alone, approximately 30.4 million students participated in NSLP. In order to be considered eligible for meals, students must be active participants in another federal program such as SNAP, or can be categorically eligible due to their status as homeless, migrant, runaway or foster child. The goal of NSLP is to provide food insecure students with a daily meal of sustenance and nutritional quality in order to help alleviate food insecurity and stabilize health status (USDA, 2017).

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for women, infants, and children, (WIC), is a federally funded assistance program established in order to protect the health of low-income women, infants and children up to five years old who suffer from low nutritional intake. In order to fulfill this goal, the WIC program provides an array of services including the provision of nutritional foods to supplement participant diets with specific nutrients, nutrition education, and referral to health services (USDA, 2018). As of 2013, an average of 8.6 million people actively participated in the WIC Program, meaning they benefitted from one or more of the services provided. This number includes approximately 4.6 million children, 2 million infants and 2 million women (Melean, 2014). Eligibility for the WIC program is categorized among women who are pregnant, postpartum, or breastfeeding, infants up to age one, and children up to age five (Melean, 2014).

The final major federal food assistance program is the School Breakfast Program (SLB). The mission of the School Breakfast Program is similar to that of the National School Lunch Program. The goal of the School Breakfast Program is to provide categorically eligible students with breakfast meals that meet Federal nutrition requirements and are offered at either a free or reduced price. The categorical eligibility of each student is the same as the National School Lunch Program. As of 2016, there were 14.57 million children participating in the School Breakfast Program, therefore actively receiving substantial nutritional intakes each morning (USDA, 2017).

B. Emergency Food Assistance Structure

1. Structure

The emergency food assistance network is one of the most important food insecurity relief initiatives in the country. Though the success of the above food assistance programs does make a tangible difference in the level of food insecurity throughout the country, the population is experiencing a heavier level of need as federal programs alone are not adequately providing the necessary quality or quantity of products needed for low-income households (Mabli, 2013; Kicinski, 2012; Greger, 2002). This level of need has translated into an increased demand for emergency food assistance in both the short and the long-term (Mabli, 2013; Kicinski, 2012; Greger, 2002). It is important to first understand the general structure of the emergency food assistance network in order to properly weigh its importance in food insecurity alleviation initiatives. The emergency food network generally consists of three main parts: central collection and distribution centers that have the purpose of providing bulk food to local relief programs, local food shelves that directly provide clients with food, and soup kitchens (Verpy, 2003). These three components are all part of a common goal for emergency food assistance, which is to generally increase the provision of emergency foods to serve as immediate protection of food and subsequent nutrient shortages experienced frequently by low-income, food insecure households (Chiu, 2016; Webb, 2013; Verpy, 2003). The collection and distribution centers that are the primary providers of food products for emergency food relief programs are also known as food banks (Ciu, 2016; Webb, 2013; Rochester, 2011). The goal of a food bank is to either directly or indirectly collect, store and distribute food that is either donated or shared in the form of emergency food relief for populations throughout the country or region that are considered most vulnerable to food insecurity (Gunderson, 2017; Chiu, 2016; Webb, 2013; Kicinski, 2012; Rochester, 2011; Riches, 2002).

The various, nonprofit organizations and facilities by which emergency food is directly provided to those in need via bulk items and/or prepared meals are referred to as food shelves/pantries and soup kitchens (Gunderson, 2017; Chiu, 2016; Webb, 2013; Kicinski, 2012; Rochester, 2011). Food pantries are an essential component of emergency food assistance regionally, as they provide food throughout local communities by serving those who cannot otherwise afford food items of the nutritional quality that are required to ensure the health and safety of their household (Chiu, 2016). The recent increase in reliance on emergency food assistance as well as the transition to more long-term dependency on these types of public assistance programs have made food pantries some of the most frequently utilized avenues for

vulnerable, food insecure peoples and households (Chiu, 2016; Webb 2013; Mabli, 2013; Kicinski, 2012; Paynter, 2011; Algert, 2006; Riches, 2002). This increase in dependency highlights some of the major faults within the federally funded assistance programs that exist today (Kicinski, 2012; Paynter, 2011). The long-term dependency on emergency food assistance throughout the country is one of the main motivations behind this project. As the level of need and dependency increases, it is important that there exist concrete metrics to measure the success of the these programs in providing at-risk populations with the nutritional sustenance they need in order to have a healthy lifestyle.

2. Reliance and Sacrifices

The associated risks of being food insecure expand far beyond negative health externalities. The insufficient access to nutritional food that comes with being food insecure not only effects short-term impacts on human health, but also long-term physical, mental, economic and societal well-being. There is growing evidence that the private, USDA-funded food assistance programs are not adequately solving for root causes of food insecurity, causing food insecure populations to become stuck in cyclical pattern of relying on emergency food assistance programs for alleviation (Riches, 2002; White House Report, 2015). The increase in reliance on emergency food assistance programs has caused the system as a whole to turn from one of short-term assistance to long-term dependency (Chiu, 2016; Paynter, 2011; Greger, 2002). A growing number of food insecure households receive help from an emergency food assistance on a regular basis (Paynter, 2011). This shift not only signifies the growing rates of food insecurity throughout the country, but highlights the prevalence of the long-term externalities of food insecurity and food poverty that are being prolonged due to failure of state welfare and public assistance programs to protect at risk populations (Riches, 2002).

As previously mentioned, there are various coping strategies and sacrifices that food insecure households have to make in order to retain a somewhat stable supply of food to meet nutritional and health demands (Gunderson, 2018; Connell, 2005; Hoisington, 2002). Unfortunately, the growing prevalence of food security has forced households to make even more dramatic sacrifices that directly jeopardize their long-term health and economic stability (Kicinski, 2012; Wood, 2009; Algert, 2006; Riches, 2002). Food insecure households are generally forced to sacrifice much of their income to high housing costs, as much as 75% of total income in many places, leaving minimal amounts for food purchasing (Algert, 2006). This leaves

households with no other choices but to participate in money saving strategies such as borrowing money, selling personal items, taking on extra work hours, putting off other bills that need to be paid, and participating in more than one assistance program (Wood, 2009). Furthermore, there is a serious correlation that exists between unemployment and food assistance, as losing unemployment benefits due to long-term unemployment leaves households and individuals with no other choice but to seek emergency relief (Kicinski, 2012). These sacrifices and coping strategies cause households to become repeatedly dependent on food aid, calling on the emergency food assistance network to make a transition from emergency to long-term relief (Riches, 2002). The heightened need of emergency food assistance across the country and the harmful sacrifices and externalities that occur due to this shift in long-term dependency are main drivers for establishing concrete and accurate measurements of success among these programs. If unsuccessful, emergency food assistance programs will further perpetuate the harmful cycles food insecurity households find themselves in, with low stability and high vulnerability.

1.3 Current Metrics used to Measure Success of Emergency Food Assistance

A. Nutritional Quality

For many low-income communities, food insecurity has become a harsh reality that has led to poor diets and subsequent health outcomes that are a product of lack of access to healthy foods, high and unaffordable prices, and low food product quality (Andreyeva, 2016; Evans, 2008). This type of food insecurity forces households to rely on various, harmful coping strategies that lead them to prioritize food quantity over quality in order to get a meal on the table (Simmet, 2017). Throughout the United States, there has been a significant rise in long-term dependency of emergency food assistance programs (Simmet, 2017; Chiu, 2016; Paynter, 2011; Greger, 2002). This increased dependency on emergency food assistance programs calls for accurate measurements of success to determine whether or not emergency food assistance programs are adequately providing adequate resources to beneficiaries, specifically healthy food products at a price they can afford and of a quality that will enable maintenance of a healthy diet (Simmet, 2017; Evans, 2008; Companion, 2010). As the primary goal of most food assistance programs is to successfully distribute emergency food to insecure populations in order to aid in efforts of food insecurity alleviation, having concrete and accurate measurements of food insecurity relative to food assistance programs is of key importance to fulfilling such a goal.

Throughout the literature, the most prominent measurements used to determine success of emergency food assistance programs in alleviating food insecurity revolve around client health and organizational capacity. In terms of client health, most of the literature cites the nutritional quality of food products provided by emergency food assistance programs as one of the key determinants of a program's success in providing healthful food products and alleviating food insecurity (Simmet, 2017; Handforth, 2013; Hoisington, 2011; Companion, 2010; Darmon, 2008; Akobundu, 2004). Tests of nutritional quality of emergency food products provided throughout the country reveal significant gaps in both the necessary food groups and nutrient characteristics (vitamins, proteins, etc.) that are essential to maintaining a healthy diet. Many assessments of the nutritional quality of products provided are based off of daily dietary guidelines (Hoisington, 2011). Various studies across the country have revealed that the majority of emergency food assistance program products and services lack adequate amounts of dairy products, fruits and vegetables (Simmet, 2017; Hositingon, 2011; Companion, 2010; Darmon, 2008; Akobundu, 2004). This lack of healthful food products leaves food insecure households who are already vulnerable to serious health risks with little to no choice regarding the food they receive in the form of assistance. For most food pantry clients, food product value does not hold to standard with dietary guidelines. Food products are most commonly found to be low in nutrients, with low levels of caloric value, protein, and fiber and dangerously high levels energy-dense food qualities including fats, sodium, carbohydrates, and sugars (Hoisington, 2011; Companion, 2010; Evans, 2008; Darmon, 2008). Furthermore, substantial losses in necessary vitamins has been documented among food provided by food pantry services across the country. Specifically, findings have noted unproficient amounts of Vitamin A, C, and D as well as low levels of zinc and calcium, signifying a severe lack of nutrition within the emergency food assistance network (Simmet, 2017; Companion, 2010; Darmon, 2008; Akobundo, 2004). These findings provide evidence that those receiving emergency food assistance are not receiving products of high enough quality to sustain a healthy diet of of nutrient-rich and energy sufficient products (Darmon, 2008).

The severe lack of essential food groups and dietary nutrients among emergency food assistance food aid elicit a core obstacle within mission success. The inability of food pantries across the country to provide healthful food products to those in need signifies not only a failure to achieve the overall goal of such programs, but also signifies the need for a shift the way these

programs provide proportionately to the level of need (Simmet, 2017; Akobundo, 2004). In order to comply with the long term nutritional and social needs that food assistance clients require as well as promote self-sufficiency with the goal of alleviating food insecurity, emergency food assistance programs must adopt systems that allow for a greater amount of healthful products and applicable resources to be available (Simmet, 2017; Handforth, 2013; Martin, 2013; Akobundo, 2004). Nutrition policy and profiling have been two suggested solutions to ensure the provision of healthful food products (Handforth, 2013). Nutrition profiling uses a ranking system that enables pantries and other emergency food assistance programs to quantitatively score the nutritional value of the food that is distributed through their program (Handforth, 2013). This type of system enables clients as well as program staff to better regulate the quality of the products being given to beneficiaries based on their level of need, which in turn has the potential to significantly increase diet quality and relieve food insecurity. Furthermore, nutrition policies are being pursued throughout the literature as a method by which the emergency food assistance network can more aggressively and proactively mandate the types of foods that are being donated (Handforth, 2013). Emergency food assistance programs, particularly food pantries and banks, often suffer the subsequent result of bulk donations that only include staple foods with low nutritional quality (Handforth, 2013; Shimada, 2013; Companion, 2010). Across the country, there is a very low reported amount of food pantries that have concrete nutrition policies and profiling systems in place (Shimada, 2013). This serves as a direct threat to success within the emergency food assistance network, as the majority of donations that come into such programs are of low nutritional quality (Shimada, 2013). In order for the emergency food assistance network to be successful, it is essential that there are effective efforts to reduce the amount of unhealthful food products in order to allow for program clients to benefit from a high quality diet that includes nutrient-dense products, which subsequently relieves them of threats of poor health and further food insecurity.

B. Organizational Capacity

Success within emergency food assistance programs is widely attributed to the organizational capacity of such programs. Generally, the capacity of an organization is defined by the various sets of attributes that can help or enable an organization to fulfill its mission (Eisinger, 2002). Organization capacity has been more specifically linked to the ability of an organization's leadership, its financial strength and its operational strategies to result in success

relative to its goal (Paynter, 2014). Organizational capacity has also been attributed throughout the literature to the level of resources available to such programs, the amount of committed staff, the decision-making processes of the program in terms of reflecting priorities, and willingness to shift or adapt different program strategies (Fyall, 2018). In the context of emergency food assistance programs, organizational capacity has been measured in order to determine whether or not a program is adequately providing enough the quantity and quality of assistance needed to alleviate poor diet quality among clients and lower their food insecurity. There are various measurements that can be used in order to determine a program's organizational capacity, which can then translate to whether or not the program is functioning in a manner that allows for success. An organization's ability to shift its performance proportionately to a shifting level of demand, an organization's perception of how well it is achieving its goal, and the frequency by which an organization has to turn away its clients are all qualitative measures that are used to determine whether or not an the organizational capacity of a program is fit to achieve its goal (Eisinger, 2002). In terms of emergency food assistance programs specifically, these types of measurements can be used to determine whether or not the way by which a program addresses client demand is adequate enough to successfully alleviate food insecurity.

These types of measurements are essential in determining whether or not the quality of emergency food assistance being received by food insecure populations is enough to relieve them of the associated health, social and economic externalities. These measurements and the subsequent program amendments that follow enable emergency food assistance programs to clarify their intent with donors in a way that increases the amount of healthful food products available while simultaneously meeting the level of client demand (Webb, 2013). Within the emergency food assistance network, there are severe obstacles that separate an organization's commitment to providing healthful food products to clients in order to alleviate food insecurity and their tangible ability to do so. For many food assistance programs, the initiatives to increase healthful food products may be in place, but their ability to deny food donations may be hampered due to the level of need (Campbell, 2013). Throughout the country, food pantries commonly struggle with the ability to store fruits and vegetables due to their lack of storage space for perishable foods (Campbell, 2013). In order to effectively increase organizational capacity in a manner that measurably reflects success in goal attainment, emergency food assistance programs must enact various nutrition policies and facilitate changes within the

organization itself (such as incorporation of nutrition expertise, profiling systems, and increasing staffing) in order to comply with the shifting level of need for healthful food products among food insecure populations (Fyall, 2018; Campbell, 2013; Eisinger 2002). The measurable success of the emergency food assistance network is determined by the level of commitment by organizations involved as well as the tangible steps taken to make way for an increase nutritional quality and standards.

1.4 Food Insecurity in Vermont

A. Present Trends and Initiatives

Between 1999 and 2013, Vermont has seen an increase in the percentage of food insecure households; leaping from 9.1 percent to 13.2 percent, and ranking 34 for prevalence of food security in the United States (Schattman, 2015). Among this percentage of food insecure households, an increasing majority of students across the state suffer from food insecurity with and without hunger (Khan, 2010). With this increase in food insecurity, there is a higher dependency on public and private food assistance programs. Food assistance is broken down into three primary categories throughout the state: supplemental assistance programs, charitable or emergency food system activities and community food security programs (Schattman, 2015). As of 2013, one in every seven Vermont residents received SNAP benefits (Schattman, 2015). When surveying the State, studies show that the majority of households have had to make sacrifices regarding daily necessities in order to afford food. Additionally, these households become reliant on various food sustaining strategies that often include consuming unhealthy, expired and watered down products (Schattman, 2015). This type of food security exists throughout the state, and does not affect solely consumers. The level of food insecurity throughout the state has a direct effect on local producers, specifically Vermont farms. On average, Vermont farms make just over \$22,000 per year (Berlin, 2011). Because Vermont's food system relies so heavily on local production, these low earnings are a direct threat to farm business viability, and increase the need for off-farm income (Belin, 2011). This economic instability across both consumer and producers throughout Vermont is dangerous in terms of initiating food insecurity relief efforts, as it is possible that efforts to increase food access while simultaneously secure economic success within the state agriculture sector could cancel one another out, making neither effective (Berlin, 2011). In order to ensure that the state's best interests are addressed in a way that ensures increased access to low-cost, healthful and local

food products while promoting economic stability of local farm producers, it is essential that the state produce a food systems plan that outlines both goals and strategy to achieve those goals.

B. Aspects of Food System Planning

The state has developed a food system model hoping to ensure food security using nutrition management practices, the incorporation of gleaning programs, implementation of farm to school initiatives, and expansion of food pantry and soup kitchen outlets (Schattman, 2015). The programs and initiatives that are implemented within a plan to increase food security should be accurately evaluated to ensure they are in line and proportionate with the level of need throughout communities across the state. Generally speaking, food system planning involves serious recognition of the overlap and necessary interaction that must occur between food insecure populations, planners, policy makers and various other stakeholders (Koiba, 2011). Food system planning efforts with the goal of stabilizing the economy while properly addressing food insecurity should include an informed decision making process, facilitate sustainable agricultural practices, improve access to healthy food, and support the local food economy (Koiba, 2011). In order to ensure success within Vermont specifically, impact assessments must be developed to more accurately examine the long-term effects to determine whether or not food assistance programs and efforts throughout the state benefit the populations most at risk. For Vermont specifically, this evaluation should consider whether or not the efforts made create long-term economic opportunity for farmers throughout the state, whether or not the efforts increase access to locally produced foods that are nutrient-dense to low-income Vermonters, and whether or not the efforts enhance the overall sustainability of the food system through regenerative agricultural practices and strategies that properly address social justice concerns (Berlin, 2011).

C. Refugee and At-Risk Populations

The most prominent sacrifice made by Vermonters related to food insecurity is that of individual values. More times than not, food insecure households are forced to use various coping mechanisms that may threaten cultural, educational, nutritional, local and community values. The Vermont food system is unique in that it relies heavily on local efforts to provide farm fresh, healthy food products. Unfortunately, these products often come at a cost that is unaffordable for many people (Berlin, 2011). Though the concept of a Vermont local food system is appealing to many, this proposition is increasingly problematic for refugee and migrant

populations across Vermont who suffer from food insecurity. For many, food insecurity does not only relate to lack of access to nutritious food, but also lack of access to familiar and culturally appropriate foods (Bose, 2011). When considering success of food assistance programs, being food insecure should mean having food available that adheres to cultural values and preferences, as a local food system and movement is inherently obligated to address the local and social concerns of a community (Berlin, 2011). For a food system to successfully support the needs of a community, there must be a facilitated relationship that draws on the connection between place and people (Bose, 2011). When it comes to addressing the needs of food insecure populations, these priorities should be no different. Increasing access to healthy food is not only about increasing the quantity of food, but rather about improving the quality of food that is needed throughout a community among various cultural backgrounds and preferences.

2. Objectives

The aim of this project was to identify which metrics can be used among local emergency food assistance programs throughout Burlington, Vermont to evaluate success. On a small scale, success in this project can be defined by the provision of healthy and adequate food products based on the level of need. On a larger scale, success is relative to a program's ability to alleviate food insecurity throughout Burlington, thereby reducing the vulnerability of at-risk populations. In order to achieve this, this thesis aimed to: 1) identify and assess the accuracy of food assistance program indicators of success, as explored through the literature and reported by organization staff and program beneficiaries; and 2) examine which metrics are most accurate in evaluating the success of such programs in providing community access to healthy food throughout Burlington, Vermont.

The provision of healthy food is an important focus, as increasing access to such food items has a dramatic impact on the negative health externalities associated with food insecurity. Accurate evaluation of success among these programs by way of qualitative data collection is essential. This is because the true experiences of those who participate in and benefit from such food assistance programs is a key source of information to for further understand how emergency food assistance programs achieve their goal of alleviating food insecurity.

3. Methods

For this project, I examined two specific food assistance programs in the Burlington area, in order to collect qualitative data regarding how they measure success in achieving their goals. I chose to focus this research in Burlington, specifically, rather than the entire state of Vermont, in order to elicit a clearer link between program performance and achievement in alleviating food insecurity. Collecting data from program staff as well as program participants within a local food system enables data analysis to reveal clearer trends of the impact of emergency food assistance programs on those they seek to help. By only focusing on two organizations within Burlington, I was able to elicit information regarding whether or not these organizations were having a direct positive, or negative, impact on food insecurity, as well as quality of life, throughout the area.

I chose to analyze the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program and the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf. These programs were chosen due to their alignment with the goals and objectives of this project, as they both support the same goal of alleviating food insecurity and the various burdens, discomforts and externalities that are associated with food insecurity and quality of life. However, each program has immensely different structures and. The structure of the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program is unique, as it explicitly provides program participants with fresh produce on a weekly basis, all of which is limited to whatever variety of crops can be successfully gleaned from the various farms that exist on the property. I thought this would be an interesting comparison to the traditional structure and provisions of the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf, which is limited to food that is directly provided through donations. Although both organizations share a similar and common goal, the resources available to each differ in a way that shifts how both define success. In this sense, incorporating an analysis of both of these programs was intended to construct a unique perspective on what emergency food assistance looks like and how it functions under certain circumstances relative to available resources.

My methodology combined semi-structured interviews of organization staff with surveys completed by program beneficiaries. The questions for both audiences were similar, and the information from these two activities was triangulated. The goal of the semi-structured interviews was to stimulate both reflection and exploration, and to learn first-hand about the staff's perspectives on food security and success within these programs (Davies, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were an ideal format for my project, as they entail the creation of questions

or prompts that encourage a dialogue between the interviewee and myself (Leech, 2002). Specifically, I conducted 3 semi-structured interviews at each location (total of 6). The number of staff members interviewed as well as who specifically was interviewed was derived somewhat randomly, as the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program was limited to only having three active staff members. Specific staff members who were interviewed were referred to me by each program coordinator, and were suggested as people who would have valuable insight into the questions my research was asking. I subsequently interviewed three staff members from the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf using the same process, in order to retain homogeneity throughout the research process.

In order to properly analyze the data gathered from these conversations, each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. Once completed, each interview was manually coded for four specific themes that emerged directly from data responses, and which are related to both research objectives and project goals. This coding system was analyzed by way of indicating what is most valued by program participants and staff members as indicators and facilitators of program success. In addition, I defined what forms of measurement most accurately transform such values into relevant and useful metrics of program success. The data analysis provided a strong qualitative assessment of these food assistance programs, which enabled me to gain valuable information about the organization's perspectives and practices to assess the efficacy of its programs. Further, it gave me insight as to what the organization deems as the most valuable indicators of success in terms of alleviating food insecurity and making a positive impact on the lives of vulnerable people in Vermont.

With permission from the organization, surveys were administered to a total of 20 people across both programs, 10 completed at each program. All 10 surveys at each program were completed on the same day, and survey participants were random and voluntary. I specifically chose to restrict the number of surveys to a total of 20 in order to elicit trends and frequencies in data, rather than trying to make broad assumptions for an entire population of people. This process enabled me to draw a clearer connection between emergency food assistance and the alleviation of food insecurity within a local food system. The surveys consisted of 10 questions that asked participants about varying subjects, including level of utilization, food quality, and program satisfaction. The various structures of each question included 'yes or no', ranking, and a likert scale of 'strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree'

(see Appendix for full list of survey questions). More specifically, the questions of this survey targeted various indicators of success experienced by beneficiaries through their participation in these programs. Surveys were designed to be as minimally invasive as possible, constructing a format that would allow participants to get their voices heard without feeling vulnerable as a beneficiary of such program.

This survey format, combined with semi-structured freely thought responses from organization staff, produced a well-rounded set of data on how food assistance programs in the area are addressing the needs of those who are part of Burlington's food insecure population. Survey responses were analyzed through descriptive statistics with a focus on frequencies. Survey questions were then grouped together relative to what theme they most accurately reflected, and responses and theme coding related to accuracy of metrics. To encourage participation and show gratitude for people's time, I provided each participant with a \$5.00 gift card from City Market, a grocery store in downtown Burlington. The various research instruments utilized were used to support an assessment of program performance over time. Their relative success in alleviating food insecurity was based on program values and their associated metrics to apply such values to a realistic sense of program success.

I chose to analyze the acquired data using four specific themes that emerged from both survey question responses by program participants as well as interviewee responses. The resulting themes included health, growth, experience and utilization. Analysis involved looking at how their prevalence within the data results answers the above research questions as well as their possible lack of prevalence highlights important gaps in the definition of success for such programs.

Responses to both survey questions and interview questions were analyzed relative to each specific theme. In doing so and using comparative techniques, I was able to indicate what metrics are reported to indicate success of both emergency food assistance programs, and which metrics are actually most accurate in measuring such success. This distinction and analysis method will enable a better understanding of what success looks like for those who rely on emergency food assistance programs in the area, and how current program structure can be altered or improved to better utilize metrics that most accurately reflect and measure that success.

4. Results

4.1 Health

In relation to the objective of this project, “health” is an important theme, as it’s prevalence in the result data directly correlates to the ability of both emergency food assistance programs to provide healthy food to prospective clients. Specifically, “health” as a theme focuses specifically on the nutritional quality of the food being provided by each program and the impact this has on the nutritional quality of clients’ diets. This theme plays an important role in looking at how to measure success of emergency food assistance programs due to the alleviation of food insecurity being highly dependent on the quality of food people have access to, and how it can impact their quality of life.

4.1 A. Survey Responses

Out of the ten total questions included within the participant survey completed by beneficiaries of both surveys, five of them were elicited as being directly linked to “health” as a theme. These questions were numbers five, six, seven, eight and nine(see Appendix for questions). These five questions were identified as being in direct relation to this emerging theme, as they target client opinion on how well the emergency food assistance program they participate in is adding to the nutritional quality of their diet. As previously mentioned, provision of healthy food products is an intrinsic part of this project, as it has been noted that the emergency food assistance system cannot be successful in alleviating food insecurity if it does not provide people in need with a diet that can sustain them healthfully. In analyzing these five questions in relation to the “health” theme previously defined, the spectrum of answers was correlated to level of success among each program being studied.

Relative to questions 5 and 6, which targeted the freshness and health of the food being received from both organizations, 90% of participants from both sites reported that they consider the food to be fresh and 100% of respondents consider the food to be healthy. These responses directly assist in identifying the accuracy of “health” as an important indicator of success within the emergency food assistance system as well as determining the accuracy of using health as a metric to define and assess success. These responses serve as an important indicator relative to program participants’ perceptions of their own health needs and whether or not they are being satisfied by each emergency food assistance program model. Based on these responses, program

participants are receiving fresh and healthy food, therefore improving the nutritional quality of their diets (Figure 1).

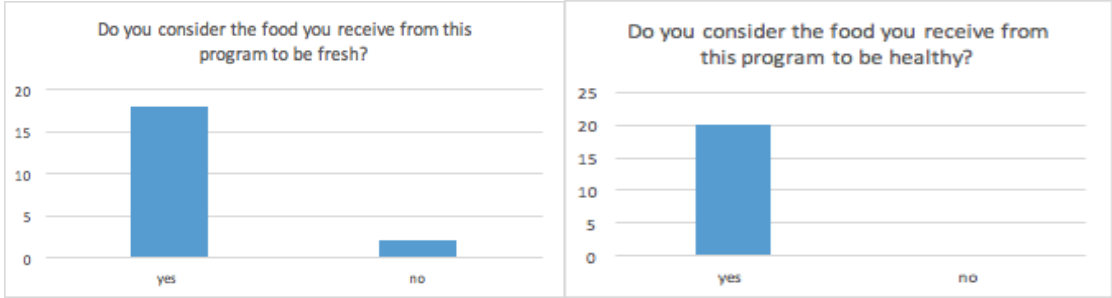


Figure 1. Recorded responses to survey questions 5 and 6.

Question 7 serves a similar purpose to that of questions 5 and 6, as it targets the nutritional quality of food being provided by asking specifically about satisfaction with the amount of both fruits and vegetables being received. In relation to the “health” theme, when asked if program beneficiaries thought they were receiving enough fruits and vegetables, 80% reported yes and 20% reported no. Of the respondents who reported no, 25% were participants of the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program, and 75% were participants of the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf, which calls attention to the structure and model of both programs. Responses to this question, though more variant than 5 and 6, still serve as important indicators relative to the accuracy of “health” an emerging theme and a metric by which to measure success of emergency food assistance programs. The majority response in satisfaction helps to conclude that participants are in fact receiving enough food that is considered fresh (Figure 2).

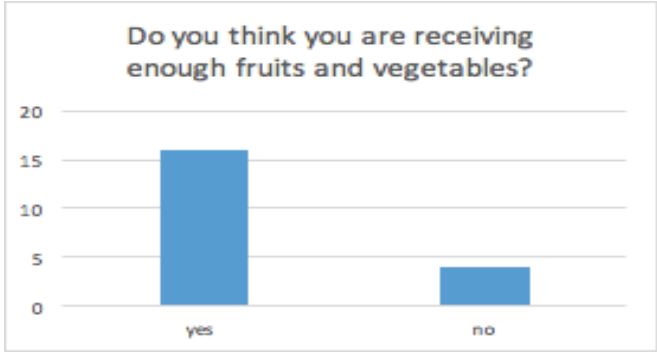


Figure 2. Recorded responses to survey question 7.

Question 8 asks survey participants to check off all of the main food groups that they believe are being adequately satisfied by the food they receive from the prospective program they participate in. Food group options include grain, meat and poultry, fruit, vegetables and legumes, dairy products, or none of the above. Out of all 20 survey participants, 8 reported Grain as being satisfied, all of whom were participants of the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf. Six reported Meat and Poultry as satisfied, all of whom were participants of the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf. Five reported Fruit as satisfied, all of whom were participants of the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program. Fifteen reported Vegetables and Legumes as satisfied, 66% of whom were participants of the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue program and 33% of whom were participants of the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf. One reported Dairy as satisfied, who was a participant of the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf. Finally, 1 reported as none of the food groups being satisfied, who was a participant of the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf. There are two important distinctions to make from this data. The first is that the majority of respondents reported being satisfied in amount of vegetables they receive, alluding to the successful provision of healthful food products. The second focuses on the importance in the variation among answers and associated programs, as they provide insight into the comprehensive diets provided by each program, eliciting various gaps in provision of food groups that generally construct a healthful diet (Figure 3).

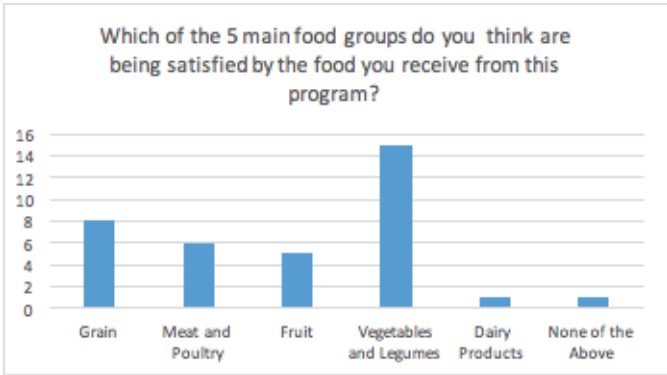


Figure 3. Recorded responses to survey Question 8.

Question 9 asks participants to rank a set of items from 1 to 5, in order of how often they receive them from their prospective program (1=least often). The list of food products included canned foods, dairy products, fruits and vegetables, sodas and sugary snacks. This question is

unique as responses among participants varied considerably based on the program they were participants of. Of this ranking system and the responses collected, the most important numbers to recognize have been identified as 1, 2, (which state that the associated products are received often), and 5 (which state that the associated products are received least often). The responses for this question varied considerably for each individual program. Responses from participants of the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program were unique, as respondents with abstained from answering the question because it was not applicable, or ranked 5 (least often) for all of the items except fruits and vegetables. This is an important trend to highlight, as the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program only provides fresh produce items to program participants.

Relative to the remaining responses, I will be highlighting the trends that have the most significance to identifying indicators of the provision of healthy food within each program. Relative to “canned goods” a total of 5 respondents ranked this option with a 1, identifying it as a product they received most often, all of whom were participants of the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf. In response to “dairy products” 2 participants ranked this item a 2. Relative to fruits and vegetables, aside from participants of the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program as previously described, 4 participants ranked this item a 1 and 1 participant ranked this item a 5. In response to “sodas” one participant of the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf ranked this item a 1, and all respondents from the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program ranked this item a 5. Finally, in relation to “sugary snacks”, all respondents from the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program ranked this item a 5. From the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf, 2 respondents ranked this item a 1, and 2 respondents ranked this item a 5. Though the trends in these responses are variable, the importance of such responses lies in the differences in what products each individual program is providing most to its clients, and how those products do or do not provide program participants with healthful food products.

4.1 B. Interview Responses

For the purpose of this project, common frequencies in response and lack of response by both organizations to certain questions relative to each of the four identified themes was recorded, analyzed and used as an indicator of what relative metrics are most prominently used to measure success.

Relative to “health” as one of the four emerging themes, interview question 1 and question 8 revealed frequent responses from both organizations that focused on health as it relates to the nutritional quality of food products being provided and their effect on program participant diets. Question 1 asked organization staff “what is the goal of this program?” High frequencies in responses associated with health as an emerging theme are important, as they indicate that the core goal of each of these emergency food assistance program is not only to provide food insecure peoples with food, but with food that will enhance the nutritional quality of their diets as well as their quality of life. Staff members of the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program highlight the provision of healthful food products as a main objective of their CSA Fair Share emergency food assistance program, stating that success occurs when the organization is able to “capture food that would otherwise go to waste and not be sold and distribute it to community members, families and organizations in need of that local, fresh, healthy produce” (Intervale Interviewee A, 2018). In addition, they take the ingredients provided on a weekly basis and “make a recipe that is delicious and simple to make” as well as “nutritious” so that program participants are able utilize the food and benefit from its healthful qualities (Intervale Interviewee C, 2018). Similarly, staff members of the Chittenden County Food Shelf highlighted the program’s emphasis on making sure people who are in need of benefits can “fill in the gaps” using the food provided by the food shelf. The food is of a quality that helps ensure “people are getting enough good, nutritious, high quality food and that they have enough for them to live full lives with full bellies” (Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf Interviewee B, 2018). Focuses on “health” as a major theme relative to the goals of such programs indicate metrics being used to measure success that focus on an emergency food assistance program’s ability to provide those who are in need with food of subsistence and higher nutritional quality, which will improve the quality of aid being received as well as effectively reduce individual and household food insecurity.

Similarly, question 8 asks “how is this program alleviating food insecurity?” This question is designed to elicit specific ways that staff members believe their program’s success can be attributed to reducing the level of food insecurity within the area. High frequencies in responses to this question associated with health from both organizations indicates that ensuring beneficiaries are receiving nutritious food products that they can utilize as part of their diet, allows for a more localized food system in which the risk of becoming food insecure is lowered.

Staff members at the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program point at how the structure of such program achieves this goal in alleviating food security, as the “know people need healthy food” so they are “literally giving them it for free”, which illustrates a form of directly addressing food insecurity as an issue (Intervale Interviewee A, 2018). Further, there is an important emphasis on the nutritional quality of the food provided by both programs and how that directly decreases food insecurity, as “there are a lot of vitamins and nutrients” in the food provided “that are very valuable and that a lot of people would otherwise not have access to” (Intervale Interviewee C, 2018). Similarly, staff members of the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf reported their efforts “to have good food on the shelf” through trying to “gather food from local stores and contacting local farmers, the local restaurants, to include food” that is “nutritious and wholesome” as a direct effort to alleviate food insecurity (Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf Interviewee C, 2018). Frequencies in responses related to “health” as a central theme were rooted most commonly in questions designed to elicit information about the larger goals of such emergency food assistance programs are and what is considered necessary in order for those goals to be achieved. High frequencies in “health” related responses indicate a heavy focus on the nutritional quality of food as a way of achieving program goals of alleviating the degree of food insecurity in the area.

When looking at low frequencies in responses centered around “health”, interview question 3, question 4, question 6 and question 9 showed the lowest frequencies in responses for both organizations. Low frequencies in responses centered around this theme is of equal importance to the analysis on high frequencies, as a lack of responses associated with “health” relative to certain questions can indicate the accuracy of such metrics associated nutritional quality of food products as inaccurate. Question 3 and question 4 both focus on this specifically, as question 3 asks staff members “In your own opinion, what is the best way to measure success within your program?” and question 4 asks “ what indicators does this program use to measure success? Are some more accurate than others?” Prior to being coded, interview transcriptions reveal little to no responses to these questions focusing on “health” as it is defined as an emerging theme. Of the responses included, most are focused at a surface level association with health by way of touching on making sure program clients are not hungry and have enough good food. Both programs focused on measuring success based off of questions such as “are we giving them enough food for each week?” (Intervale Interviewee A, 2018), as well as

accomplishing goals that “help improve nutrient deficiencies or anything these people might be struggling with” (Intervale Interviewee C, 2018). Responses also included broader goals for success such as making sure clients can “come in and enjoy the fresh produce that we have and the salvaged food and canned goods” and that families are accommodated, as “their measure of success would be full bellies” (Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf Interviewee B, 2018). This lack of responses to these specific questions is important, as it indicates that the nutritional quality of food being provided is not a major metric used to evaluate the success of emergency food assistance programs. Question 6 and question 9 start to address this issue by focusing on ways by which both organizations could better their services. Specifically, question 6 asks “in what ways could this program improve?” and question 9 asks “what have some obstacles been and how could the program do a better job of overcoming such obstacles?” The subsequent low frequencies in responses to both of these questions relative to “health” as a theme further enforce the conclusion that the nutritional quality of food products being provided by both programs is not of greatest importance when looking to measure the success of both programs. Relative to health, both programs briefly alluded to obstacles and improvements that could be made, primarily based on the issue of lack of variety, as “most of the groceries we have on the shelf are canned goods” and “the selection of crops” available “isn’t always equal week to week”, causing program staff to “supplement for other things” (Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf Interviewee C, 2018; Intervale Interviewee C, 2018). The combination of these four questions and their lack of focus on “health” indicates that the quality of food being provided as a form of aid to food insecure individuals and households in the Burlington area is not a primary metric used to measure success of such programs.

4.2 Growth

“Growth” is an important emerging theme being analyzed within the responses to both surveys and interviews, as it elicits key indicators that are recognized as being essential to program success. “Growth”, in the context of this project, refers specifically to a program’s need to grow in terms of size and capacity building. “Growth in terms of size” is important to define, as it relates to a program’s indicator of success being directly related to whether or not the program can, will or has the ability to expand to a larger space, reach more clients, provide greater outreach, etc. “Growth in terms of capacity building” refers specifically to a program

measuring its success by how much work, strength and willpower exists within the program to keep it functioning properly in aim of achieving its goals.

4.2 A. Survey Responses

Based on how this emerging theme has been defined and its focus on program structure and functionality, there were no survey questions that directly linked to the theme of “growth”. Information relative to this theme comes primarily from interview questions and responses with organizational staff, as this theme focuses on diving deeper into how to measure success of emergency food assistance programs through the lens of program expansion. This type of information was not gathered from survey questions and responses, as organization staff were the primary stakeholders of information that would help identify the level of need for these programs to expand and how that directly equates to program success.

4.2 B. Interview Responses

Relative to “growth” as one of the four emerging themes, interview question 3, question 4, question 5 and question 6 revealed frequent responses for both organizations focused on growth as it relates to each program’s need and focus on growing in size as well as capacity building. All four of these questions are related in the sense that they ask how the programs measure their success and what each program is currently doing to maintain that success as well as what could be improved to ensure such success. Specifically, question 3 asks “in your own opinion, what is the best way to measure success within your program?”, question 4 asks “what indicators does this program use to measure success? Are some more accurate than others?”, question 5 asks “how is this program achieving its goals?”, and question 6 asks “In what ways could this program improve?” Responses to these four questions revealed very high frequencies in responses related to growth. Specifically, the ability and need of each program to increase the amount of people it assists as well as numerically report how much food is being given and to how many people. This was of significance when asked how to measure success and how the program is achieving its goals. Staff members from the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program reported that “if we increase the amount of food we glean and the amount of families we serve, then we feel like we are being successful” with an emphasis on expanding outreach in the community, a “one of the biggest ways that we meet our goals is just increasing awareness in

the community” (Intervale Interviewee A, 2018). Similarly, staff members of the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf reported a major metric of success as the “measuring how many meals are served and how many people are being helped” (Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf Interviewee A, 2018). The idea of program expansion as something that can be reported as well as consistently strived for within the structure and assessments of both programs shows a certain priority given to actions within each program that will enhance the outreach and scope of program initiatives as well as improve capacity building of each program. These response frequencies associated with growth as an emerging theme reveal the concept of program growth to be one of the major and most accurate ways by which emergency food assistance programs measure and achieve success.

When analyzing low frequencies, responses associated with “growth” as a theme were least prevalent in regards to question 1 which asked “what is the goal of this program?” With no responses relative to this theme from the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf and only a few from the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program, the lack of focus on “growth” as a primary goal of such programs compared to the abundance of responses relative to success and sustaining success of programs focused on “growth” illustrates interesting insight into how each program views growth as an action to achieve success rather than a form of success. These types of response frequencies enable “growth” to be sighted as a key metric to be used to accurately measure the success of emergency food assistance programs. The focus on expansion of program fundamentals rather than quality of client care is an interesting and important distinction to be highlighted when thinking of ways to best measure the success of these programs.

4.3 Experience

“Experience” is a theme that focuses specifically on the personal narratives relative to both client experience and satisfaction with each assistance program. This theme develops as an important qualitative factor within this research, as whether or not it is cited as being included or needing to be included as an accurate metric/indicator of success of the emergency food assistance system allows for the inclusion of valuable information regarding the needs of clients as directly reported by clients. “Experience” as an emerging theme is focused on discovering the value of the client and their needs in a program’s work towards achieving its goals.

4.3 A. Survey Responses

Of the 10 questions included in the participant survey, question 10 was identified as being most prominently linked to “experience” as an emerging theme. This question asks participants to rank four statements using a likert scale with a range of answers that includes “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “disagree” and “strongly disagree”. Each statement was designed to help gain insight to the level of satisfaction with the program relative to client experience, comfort and need.

The first statement of this question claims “the staff at this program are accommodating”. Of all 20 responses, 70% of respondents reported “strongly agree”, 25% reported “agree” and 5% reported “neither agree nor disagree” (Figure 4). This variation in response indicates a generally positive experience among program participants with staff members, which allows for a more satisfactory experience overall.

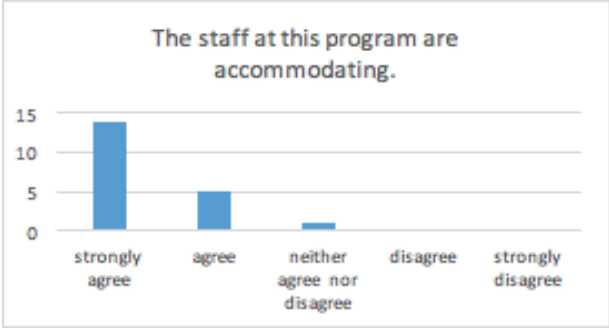


Figure 4. Responses to Statement 1 of Question 10.

The second statement of this question claims “this program is effective in addressing my food preferences”. Of all 20 responses, 40% reported “strongly agree”, 40% reported “agree” and 20% reported “neither agree nor disagree”. Though no participants reported either “disagree” or “strongly disagree” in response to this claim, it is important to note that a large percent of respondents (20%) reported a neutral response in which they neither agree nor disagree with this claim. This is a significant statistic to highlight, as it has potential to point towards a certain ignorance of these programs towards cultural preferences, specific health needs, and general client preferences that help ensure satisfaction. In this sense, this type of response could indicate a lack of success among such programs to accommodate clients and give them a positive overall experience in their food assistance (Figure 5).

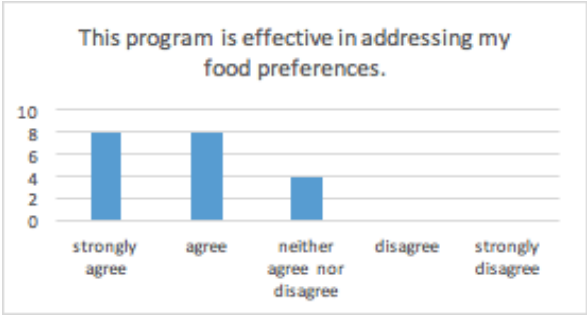


Figure 5. Responses to Statement 2 of Question 10.

The third statement of this question claims “I feel comfortable revisiting this program”. This statement is important as it directly relates to the environment that is constructed for those who are in need and receiving benefits in the form of emergency food assistance. Of all 20 responses, 75% of participants reported “strongly agree”, 20% reported “agree” and 5% reported ‘neither agree nor disagree’ (Figure 6). This majority report of feeling comfortable revisiting each program is significant, as it reflects a high level of program satisfaction among participants based on experience. This can equate to success within these programs, as retention and satisfaction are two important qualities that are highly dependent on a client’s overall comfort and experience.

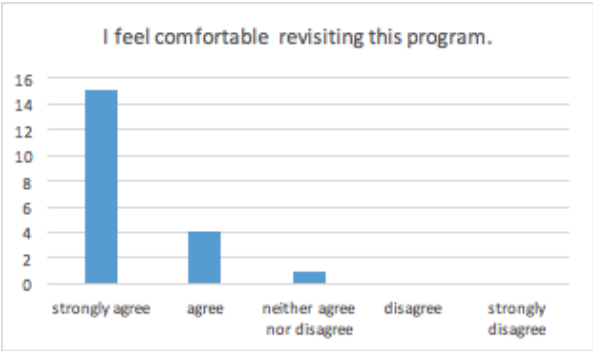


Figure 6. Responses to Statement 3 of Question 10.

The final statement included in this question claims “I am satisfied with this program”. Of all 20 responses, 60% of participants reported “strongly agree” and 40% of participants reported “agree” (Figure 7). These responses illustrate that 100% of program participants are generally satisfied with these two programs. This type of statistic should be weighed heavily

when evaluating “experience” as a theme and potential indicator of success among emergency food assistance programs.



Figure 7. Responses to Statement 4 of Question 10.

The varied responses to the four above statements directly reflect participant satisfaction and identify “experience” as an emerging theme that elicits various indicators of success. The generally positive reports ranging from “strongly agree” to “agree” for the majority of respondents indicates that client experience can be used as a tool to help gauge the importance of client need and satisfaction when measuring the success of emergency food assistance programs. This type of indicator is one that, when combined with indicators from all four emerging themes, puts client experience as an indicator that can be used to evaluate the accuracy of other indicators that have emerged from other themes.

4.3 B. Interview Responses

Relative to “experience” as one of the four emerging themes, interview question 3 and question 9 revealed frequent responses for both organizations focused on experience as it relates to the value each program places on the personal narratives and stories of program beneficiaries and the weight they hold as an accurate metric to measure program success. Specifically, question 3 asks “in your own opinion, what is the best way to measure success within your program?” and question 9 asks “what have some obstacles been and how could the program do a better job of overcoming such obstacles?” The high frequency in responses to both of these questions associated with “experience” as a central theme help indicate that valuing the personal preferences, narratives and feedback directly reported by program beneficiaries is a way emergency food assistance programs can effectively address issues related to the success of the

program overall. Staff members of the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program refer to success as being evident when “one, two, three, four, ten, twenty people come up and tell me, you know, the impact that the program has had on their life”, allowing for staff members to “measure success by just anecdotal stories” (Intervale Interviewee A, 2018). Furthermore, there is an important emphasis on understanding that all program participants come from different experiences and situations, and that “there are just so many different cultural experiences, you know we can’t meet everyone’s needs but we try” which serves as enough of an effort to cultivate success (Intervale Interviewee A, 2018). Similarly, staff members of the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf emphasize similar ways of validating success, stating “it’s really the direct contact you have with people and you hear people sharing their stories” and that “realistically, measuring success has to look at the person rather than just statistics and numbers” in a system that veers from “making assumptions about what people want or what’s best for them” (Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf Interviewee B, 2018). High frequencies relative to this theme specifically are of great importance, as it indicates an important need for emergency food assistance programs to listen and accommodate for the needs and experiences of program participants. Without doing so, it would be increasingly difficult for programs such as these to solve for issues regarding client satisfaction. Ensuring that program structure accommodates for the various preferences of program beneficiaries, as well as enhancing the program environment to be comfortable and welcoming to program participants, is a crucial way by which these programs can reach success.

When analyzing low frequencies, interview question 5, question 6, question 7 and question 8 resulted in having the lowest response rate regarding “experience” as a central theme. Specifically, question 5 asks “how is this program achieving its goals?”, question 6 asks “in what ways could this program improve?”, question 7 asks “what is this organization doing to be flexible to the varying demand and need among food insecure populations?” and question 8 asks “how is this program alleviating food insecurity?” All four of these questions refer to what emergency food assistance programs are doing and could be doing in order to better address the varying needs of the food insecure populations they tend to. The resulting low frequency in responses to these questions associated with “experience” as a central theme indicate an important gap in the way in which emergency food assistance programs evaluate and track their success. Without paying special attention to and incorporating the experiences reported by

program beneficiaries themselves, programs are unable to accurately track their success in terms of the impact that the program has on the lives of those they serve. Without an embedded inclusion of client experiences, narratives and reports, emergency food assistance programs will struggle in assessing whether or not they are truly moving the needle in terms of alleviating food insecurity throughout the Burlington area.

4.4 Utilization

The final emerging theme being used to analyze the following data is that of “Utilization”. Specifically, “utilization” refers to the ability of clients to fully utilize the food products they receive in a way that will effectively assist in alleviating their level of individual or household food insecurity. This is an intrinsic part to evaluating the success of emergency food assistance programs. If program participants are not given the tools or knowledge necessary to fully utilize what is provided by such programs to help themselves, then the effectiveness and success of the program is significantly hindered and devalued. Analyzing “utilization” as an emerging theme within this data allows for an insight into whether or not the success of these programs is focused on the long-term alleviation of food insecurity based on self-sufficiency.

4.4 A. Survey Responses

Out of the 10 total questions included in the participant survey, questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 are most directly linked to the “utilization” theme and serve as helpful indicators regarding the level of dependency and self-efficiency of program participants based on the services each program provides and their overall experience. By asking program participants about how frequently they utilize such program and who they are utilizing it for, based on their own circumstances, I was able to paint a clearer picture of how well these emergency food assistance programs are advocating and providing for the needs of their clients.

Question 1 of the participant survey asks “is this program the only food assistance program that you currently utilize?” Of all 20 responses, 50% of respondents reported “yes” and 50% of respondents reported “no” (Figure 8). These responses support the notion that the level of need for emergency food assistance programs is increasing. This helps in emphasizing the importance of programs, such as the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program and the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf, to have accurate ways to measure their success in order to

ensure that their clients are getting a sufficient level of assistance based on their circumstance and level of need.

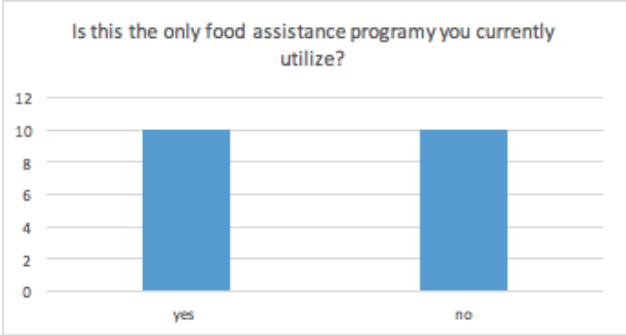


Figure 8. Responses to Survey Question 1.

Question 2 of the participant survey asks “is the food you receive from this program being used to provide meals for more people than just yourself”. Of all 20 responses, 50% of respondents reported “yes” and 50% of respondents reported “no” (Figure 9). This statistic is of similar importance to that derived from Question 1, as it highlights the need for emergency food assistance programs to be successful and maintain such success, as their impact is reaching more than those who walk in the door on a regular basis.

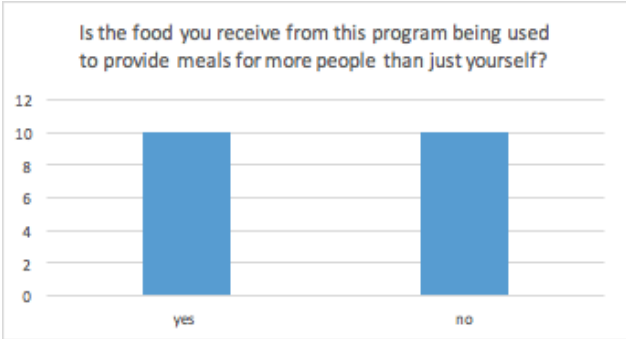


Figure 9. Responses to survey Question 2.

Question 3 of the participant survey asks “if you answered ‘yes’ to the previous question, how many people are utilizing the food you receive from this program?” Of the 10 participants who responded “yes” to Question 2, 80% reported the food they receive being utilized by 1-2 people, and 20% reported the food they receive being utilized by 2-5 people (Figure 10). These results can be interpreted in various ways. To assume who the 1-5 other people utilizing the food

being received from these programs would be too large of an assumption to make. However, the importance of these responses focuses on applicability to the previous question, giving a greater idea as to how far the success, or lack of success, of these programs reaches and the impact it has on a scale that is otherwise unreported.

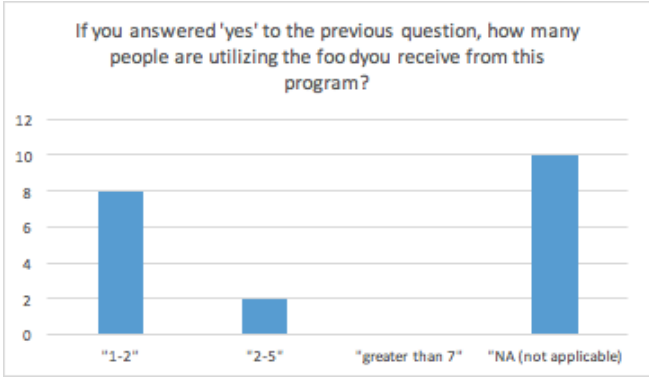


Figure 10. Responses to survey Question 3.

Question 4 of the participant survey asks “on average, how many times per month do you utilize this program?” Of all 20 responses, 30% reported utilizing the program 1-2 times per month, 55% reported utilizing the program 2-5 times per month, 5% reported utilizing the program 5-7 times per month and 10% reported utilizing the program more than 10 times per month (Figure 11). The variance in these answers highlights the level of need among food insecure people in the Burlington area. It is important that such programs like the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program and the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf base their success metrics on accommodating for the needs of people and situations across a spectrum, as every individual client has various circumstantial aspects of their life that shift their level of need one way or the other. In order to be successful, emergency food assistance programs must provide for need across such spectrum.

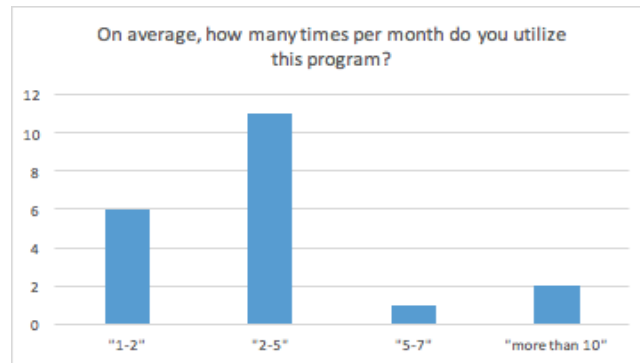


Figure 11. Responses to survey Question 4.

4.4 B. Interview Responses

Relative to “utilization” as the final of the four emerging themes, interview question 7 and question 9 revealed frequent responses among both organizations focused on utilization as it relates to program participants’ ability to use the food they receive in a way that will have an impact on their individual or household food insecurity. Utilization is an important factor to consider when addressing the success of emergency food assistance programs, as it refers to the tangibility of such aid within the context of each beneficiaries’ individual or household circumstance. Specifically, question 7 asks “what is this organization doing to be flexible to the varying demand and need among food insecure populations?” and question 9 asks “what have some obstacles been and how could the program do a better job of overcoming such obstacles?” High frequency of responses to these two questions relative to utilization indicate that both programs value the ability of clients to create long-term food security for themselves by way of using the services provided by such program, as a major metric that can and should be used to measure an emergency food assistance program’s success. Staff from the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program emphasize the importance of utilization, stating “that’s why we try to provide as much education and nutrition outreach as possible, because we are doing this to prevent food from going to waste and we want to make sure that when people leave with their CSA pickup that there’s not confusion with what they can do with it” (Intervale Interviewee A, 2018). The variety of circumstances and situations program participants are coming from also plays a large role determining what tools and forms of utilization are given to clients, as staff from the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf describe, “if you’re homeless and don’t have a kitchen, you don’t have a way to prepare food, you know dry spaghetti isn’t going to help you”

and sometimes “having sandwiches, salads, just ready to go food, so people don’t have to worry about preparing anything” (Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf Interviewee A, 2018). Removing any negative stigma surrounding being a beneficiary of a food assistance program, while simultaneously helping ensure that such benefits reach further, translate into assimilated tools of success used on an individual and household level. These are identified as accurate ways to assess the success of emergency food assistance programs and should be a focus of program goals and structure.

When assessing low frequencies relative to “utilization as a theme”, interview question 3, question 4, question 6 and question 8 revealed little responses focused on the ability to provide program participants with the necessary tools and knowledge needed to translate short-term emergency food assistance into long-term food security. Specifically, question 3 asks “in your own opinion, what is the best way to measure success within your program?”, question 4 asks “what indicators does this program use to measure success?”, question 6 asks “in what ways could this program improve?”, and question 8 asks “how is this program alleviating food insecurity?” The relatively low frequency in responses to these questions associated with utilization, compared to the above questions that resulted in high frequency, addresses an issue of importance in which utilization may serve as a goal for such programs but lacks concrete initiatives to ensure it. Staff from the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program illustrate the need for that type of insurance, stating “we are doing a great thing here, giving people food, but are they actually eating it and enjoying it are very important questions to ask too” (Intervale, Interviewee C, 2018). Staff of the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf describe similar concerns, stating “but even then it’s hard, because people need more support than just graduating from CKA and getting a job” (Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf Interviewee A, 2018). For both organizations, it was reported as difficult to properly track the ways in which program participants use the food they receive. It is difficult to track the amount of food that ends up being eaten compared to wasted, whether or not every item properly addresses the cultural and nutritional preferences of every individual or household it goes to, and whether or not the assistance provided by such programs is truly enough to alleviate the burdens associated with food insecurity. The low frequency in responses associated to these four questions that address such issues allude to the need for better methods by which programs can track and measure the level of utilization attributed to each participant individual or household that receives the

provided benefits. Further, this type of pattern indicates utilization as an important metric that should be used to measure success of such programs, but requires greater initiatives and methods that allow for such utilization to be tracked and measured.

5. Discussion

The goal of this project was to explore and evaluate the various metrics that are currently used within the Burlington area food system to measure the success of emergency food assistance programs. In doing so, this research and its evaluations have led to a series of discoveries indicating what is working and what is missing in the structure of the current emergency food assistance system, which aims to provide basic nutritional needs for the food insecure population of our community. Emergency food assistance programs are an essential part of food insecurity alleviation initiatives and our food system as a whole. They provide opportunities for those in need to fill the gaps of what other forms of federal aid may be lacking, as well as provide a comfortable space in which needs can be satisfied on a level that is enough to stabilize individual or household condition. In recent years, emergency food assistance has become a method by which those in need satisfy short and long term needs. From these various purposes and values within the emergency food assistance system is where the four emerging themes by which this research has been guided emerged. Health, growth, experience and utilization as themes are all factors that should be intrinsic parts of emergency food assistance programs as a whole. In support of this, Paynter et al (2011) expresses the disconnect that exists between what is known relative to the level of need for both public and private food assistance programs and what is not known relative to information about program participants and their level of need (Paynter, 2011). In an aim to solve for this, Paynter pushes the importance of “understanding the characteristics of people needing these services” as “critical to designing effective anti-poverty programs” (Paynter, 2011). The data collection and analysis process of this project aimed to fulfill this hole in knowledge. By evaluating the collected data using these four emerging themes, I was able to identify and assess what is most prominently valued by both program staff and participants, in terms of what it takes to be successful in the mission to alleviate food insecurity relative to specific needs. From eliciting these indicated values, I was then able to determine which metrics are and would be most accurate in an attempt to measure the performance of each program over time. In addition, this information connected to each

program's goals and ability to provide services to adequately alleviate food insecurity throughout Burlington, Vermont.

Utilizing a mixed-methods approach to this research allowed for a unique set of perspectives to come forth and facilitate a data analysis that involves the needs of program participants as well as the goals and opinions of program staff. The combination of these perspectives has resulted in the emergence of some themes as more prominent when used to measure the success of such program. In relation to health as a theme, the general quality of food was reported as satisfactory by the majority of program participants. This level of satisfaction is important as it indicates that the nutritional quality of food products being provided as a form of emergency food assistance are providing for the health needs and preferences of those who are receiving assistance. In comparison to the responses of program staff, health as an objective involving the provision of nutritious and healthy food to clients is interpreted as important to staff, but not always of priority when compared to the level of need and urgency to attend people who need food. This is an important distinction, as it devalues the quality of food as a primary indicator of success as a metric.

In relation to growth as an emerging theme, organization staff members reported the expansion of each program as a major goal and method by which program success can be measured and evaluated. Growth in amount of food provided, people cared for and populations reached were indicated as major program objectives to which program initiatives strived for. Success in these realms served as top indicators of what determine whether or not an emergency food assistance program can be deemed successful. This is an important, identified metric, as it attributes much of the success of emergency food assistance programs to factual, quantitative information that can be reported rather than the specific needs of program participants.

In evaluating experience as a central theme and possible metric of accuracy, the personal narratives, preferences and stories of program participants were reported as highly valued by both staff members and program participants. In many cases, the reflections and stories of program participants to program staff serve as key indicators of how well the associated program is achieving its goals. This is an important metric to highlight, as it directly connects the needs of clients to the initiatives of each emergency food assistance program. Though important in the perspectives of program staff, there is a significant lack of emphasis put on "experience" as a concrete metric that can be used to evaluate program success. Generally, both programs lacked

any concrete way of measuring or tracking the experiences of program participants and evaluating what that means for shifts in program initiatives as well as program success in regards to actual impact on the lives of those who receive benefits from each program.

In regards to utilization as the final emerging theme analyzed throughout this research process, there is a heavy link between the growing dependency of clients on such emergency food assistance programs and the tools outside of just food products that are given to program participants in order to reduce their varying levels of food insecurity. Generally, results of both surveys and interviews indicate a lack of means to measure the level of utilization that is accessible to program participants outside of the program. With survey results indicating that a large percentage of program participants are providing food for more than just themselves, as well as an increase in the frequency of visits to each program, it is of great importance that emergency food assistance program structure includes tools and education techniques as well as outreach services that can provide clients with the knowledge, skills and tools to utilize the benefits they receive to the highest possible degree. Specifically, this means finding ways to ensure that program participants will be able to prepare and consume all of the food they receive in a manner that will properly address their individual and/or household needs. In doing so, a program's ability to provide for utilization becomes a major metric of accuracy to help determine program success.

Analyzing results based on these four emerging themes enabled me to elicit what is most prominently and heavily valued among both organizations in terms of what is important and essential to program success. It is these values from which accurate forms of measurement can be designed in order to assess the success of emergency food assistance programs. Based on the results of this research, I propose that metrics to evaluate success should focus on the interactions with program clients, in terms of their own perception of what makes the program they participate in work for them, as well as what about each program has an impact on their quality of life. The most accurate way to measure these types of values, is through talking to people who regularly participate in these programs, and gaining insight on what is important to them relative to emergency food assistance and food insecurity alleviation. In turn, this feedback can be incorporated into these programs as a structural way of ensuring goals are being met and success is being reached. The USDA has conducted similar work focused on a Community Food Security Assessment, which is designed to collect "various types of data to provide answers to

questions about the ability of existing community resources to provide sufficient and nutritionally sound amounts of culturally acceptable foods to households in the community (Cohen, 2002). Components of such assessments that have been indicated as most helpful in properly assessing a community's ability to provide for food insecure populations include effectiveness of program infrastructure, accessibility to healthful food within a local food system, amount of local food initiatives and the scope of food policies directed at incorporating food-related issues into a local planning process (Cohen, 2002). These types of components align with those that I elicited from my work. By routinely collecting direct narrative and experience-based information from program participants, these types of components can be assessed in their effectiveness and capacity to provide for client needs. Specifically, the most accurate ways to achieve this is by regularly administering participant surveys that allow clients to truthfully answer questions regarding their experience and level of satisfaction. This type of feedback can be used by emergency food assistance programs to adjust program structure and functionality in order to better accommodate for the needs of participants. There are other opportunities for programs to retrieve direct feedback from participants through activities such as focus groups, in which clients are encouraged to share their experiences in an environment that will encourage collaboration between program and participant in a way that will prioritize client need.

Although the structure of both the Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program and the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf differ greatly, the goal of both of these emergency food assistance programs is the same. They seek to provide food and assistance to those who are in need to the extent that the burden associated with being food insecure is lifted to a point of stability. In order to do so, it is of great necessity that emergency food assistance programs have accurate and relevant metrics that can be used to evaluate their success in achieving such a goal based on what is most highly valued as intrinsic to program success. However, it is important to recognize at this point that there are certain limitations to each program that directly affect what is valued as well as how success is perceived. Specifically, both programs are limited in their level of choice regarding what food they make available to their participants. The Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Program is limited explicitly to the produce that is available from the various farms being gleaned. This not only limits the type of food products being provided to fruits and vegetables, but it also directly affects the variety of food each week, due to the unpredictable nature of what will be available. The Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf faces

similar limitations regarding food choice, as what can be provided to clients is solely determined by donations. These types of limitations are important to recognize as they directly affect the food experience that is available to those who are seeking assistance.

Metrics to measure success that are derived from values directly reported by both program staff and participants is an effective and accurate way of assessing the performance of emergency food assistance programs. By creating forms of measurement that account for health, growth, experience and utilization, the quality of assistance given to food insecure populations throughout the Burlington area will improve to the point at which dependency can comfortably decrease, and the probability of stability can be ensured in both the short and long-term. The type of collaboration that results from direct staff and participant communication allows for higher levels of assurance regarding an emergency food assistance program's ability to adequately address the needs of program participants, as relative to their level of food insecurity and need.

In analyzing these responses and providing possible measurements for success, it is important to recognize that such outcomes would vary significantly based on what organizations were analyzed as well as the states in which the research was performed. My decision to choose two organizations based within the local food system of Burlington reflect a need to elicit a clearer connection between level of need, program values, and program success in the endeavor to alleviate food insecurity locally. However, resources available to programs, needs of food insecure clients and populations, and program capacity can vary greatly depending on location, due to the demographics of those who are in need as well as the social, economic and political structure of the location (e.g. different states). Vermont's food culture is unique in the sense that there is regular and frequent access to a food system that encourages production and utilization of produce. The food culture of other states across the country could reduce the availability of such food and resources to be available. This would significantly shift the associated values of emergency food assistance programs in terms of what they think is most important in providing a path towards food security. In focusing deliberately on the local food system of Burlington, I was able to elicit values and subsequent measurements that would best adhere to the needs of the local population in need.

The importance of having accurate metrics to evaluate the success of emergency food assistance programs emerges from the need for these programs to assess their performance over time. It is also key to use measurements that reflect their values regarding the alleviation of food

insecurity. In identifying these values from the emerging themes relative to research results, concrete and accurate metrics can be developed and utilized among emergency food assistance programs in order to track success in relation to program goals. With such value-based metrics comes the assurance that these emergency food assistance programs exist as a stable form of relief for those who are in need.

Appendix

A. Survey Questions

Thank you for your participation in this quick survey about your experiences with the Intervale Gleaning and Food Rescue Program!

[Download](#)

Section A:

A1. Which program are you representing in this survey?
 Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf
 Intervale Gleaning and Food Rescue Program

A2. Is this program the only food assistance program that you currently utilize?
 Yes
 No

A3. Is the food you receive from this program being used to provide meals for more people than just yourself?
 Yes
 No

A4. If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, how many people are utilizing the food you receive from the Intervale Gleaning and Food Rescue Program?
 2-4
 5-7
 greater than 7
 NA (not applicable)

A5. On average, how many times per month do you utilize this program?
 1-2
 2-5
 5-7
 7-10
 more than 10

A6. Do you consider the food you receive from this program to be fresh?
 Yes
 No

A7. Do you consider the food you receive from this program to be healthy?
 Yes
 No

A8. Do you think you are receiving enough fruits and vegetables?
 Yes
 No

A9. Which of the 5 main food groups do you think are being satisfied by the food you receive from this program?
 Grain
 Meat and Poultry
 Fruit
 Vegetables and Legumes
 Dairy Products
 None of the Above

A10. Please rank the following items 1-5 in the order of how often you receive them from this program. 1 being most often, 5 being least often.

Canned Foods					
Dairy Products					
Fruits and Vegetables					
Sodas					
Sugary Snacks					

A11. Please rate the following statements based on your experience.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The staff at this program are accommodating.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This program is effective in addressing my food preferences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel comfortable revisiting this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall, I am satisfied with this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thank you for your participation!

B. Interview Questions

1. What is the goal of this program?
2. What do you think are the greatest risks of being food insecure?
3. In your own opinion, what is the best way to measure success within your program?
4. What indicators does this program use to measure success?
 - a. Are some indicators more accurate than others?
5. How is this program achieving its goals?
6. In what ways could this program improve?
7. What is this organization doing to be flexible to the varying demand and need among food insecure populations?
8. How is this program alleviating food insecurity?
9. What have some obstacles been and how could the program do a better job of overcoming such obstacles?
10. Any other comments, questions that arise.

C. Interview Responses (Categorized by Organization and Theme)

1. Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue Responses

Question 1: What is the goal of this program?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
<p>“So, the goal of the gleaning and food rescue program is to capture food, mostly fruits and vegetables from local farmers, capture food that would otherwise go to waste and not be sold, um, and distribute it to community members, families, and organizations in need of that local, fresh, healthy produce.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“You know, they come here every week and they, there’s 200 households enrolled.” -Interviewee A</p>	<p>“Um, I would honestly say we are more focused on the people side of things than the actual food waste.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“Um, and, that’s why we created a CSA pickup that looks like any other because we want folks to appreciate the agricultural economy and to appreciate farmers in a way that other people who participate in a CSA can.” - Interviewee A</p>
<p>“Um, so that’s like the main goal of the program, is to feed people and provide them with a local food experience, you know in the role that our CSA pickup plays in their lives.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“Um, so 200 families, 200 households are enrolled and 20 organizations are enrolled that I would say an average of 100 to 150 come every week because there are plenty of life circumstances that come up that prevent them from getting here.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“Um, and ya we want to reduce food waste, capture food that we know people want and that we know people need that will make them feel better, and distribute it to them in the most dignified way that we can.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>So, my goal is to have everybody be able to make it, at home, without having to go to the grocery store to buy any supplemental ingredients. Just using the stuff we are giving them and basic pantry items. Not everybody is able to do that because not everybody here has a home or a pantry but for the vast majority of people who are part of this program, they have a kitchen and basic staples such as salt and pepper. Um, yea, so that is the goal of my job.” - Interviewee B</p>
<p>“So, that’s my job and the goal of that is to make a recipe that is delicious and simple to make. Also nutritious but, I really try to make it so that each recipe doesn’t have any like crazy ingredients in it.” - Interviewee B</p>		<p>“So I think it’s equally as important for the goal of this whole program to have people feel good here while they have this experience and get to have fun and go out in the garden and pick their own food. And just gain more of a connection to where they’re accessing their food especially when they may not have the resources to make those decisions all the time.” - Interviewee C</p>	<p>“Make people feel comfortable in the environment and comfortable with the fact that the setting is designed for people who are eligible for benefits.” - Interviewee C</p>

<p>“So, I think the goal of this program is equally to provide fresh and local produce that’s not going to be utilized..”</p>			
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Question 3: In your own opinion, what is the best way to measure success within your program?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
<p>“Um, also because a lot of things we provide in the CSA are things that grow really well in Vermont, so, they’re usually in abundance so we provide a lot of greens, we provide a lot of kale, and so it’s like for a Vermonter or someone living in Vermont whether that be anew America, or a 12th generation Vermonter to tell me that they finally have an excited idea about what todo with kale, i’m like great. Because farmers in Vermont are always going to grow kale and we have so much of it. And it’s like, if you can figure out how to eat that then you’re going to be better off. So, you know, success to me is like Vermonters learning how having access to and, learning how to cook and eat food that is grown here.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“ Like, what grants, like what foundations and what people who administer the grants want us to know year after year is how many pounds we gleaned, how many pounds we distributed, which should be the same thing because we distribute everything we glean, um, where it went, who it fed, uh, you know it’s a lot of numbers like we measure our program’s success by nu-, we always try to glean more pounds of food. Like this year our goal is 60,000 pounds of food, we increase the number of people that we serve every year.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“But, i like, think that our program is successful if I have one, two, three, four, ten, twenty people come up and tell me, you know the impact that the program has had on their life or that they’ve tried a new recipe and oh my god now i know what to do with kale and i didn’t know what to do with that before.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“Yea so like I love to know like are we moving the needle? Like, are we, I know we’re providing people with delicious food every week and that they are enjoying. And that, feels really good and that feels like success. But, knowing that 14 percent are food insecure and like, oh is that number changing? Are we changing that number or are we just barely dipping our toe in te issue? And like, so, I don’t know.” - Interviewee A</p>
<p>“Because, food insecurity is like a very personal, food is very personal, and um, admitting that you’re struggling to eat healthy or to eat well or that you’re struggling to eat at all can be really vulnerable and really scary.”- Interviewee A</p>	<p>“ So, when I started at this job four years ago, it was 125 families then it was 150 then it was 175 and this year it’s 200.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“So, yea I measure success by just like anecdotal stories honestly. And people telling me I’m doing a good job.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“Because a lot of the vegetables aren’t, they aren’t the most desirable ones and that’s why we have access to them because the farmers let us go in and glean them from their fields. So, like a lot of the times we don’t have the most desired ones.” - Interviewee B</p>
	<p>“Um, so if we increase the amount of food we glean and the amount of families we serve, then we feel like we are being successful. But, we are going to reach a point when we are kind</p>	<p>“So just, you know, the fact that people show up every week and it’s proven to be a valuable program in their life is success to me.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“But, um, so, we have like eggplant and fennel and things that people might not be so familiar with. And I think that a lot of the times that’s not really what they would prefer or what</p>

	<p>of at capacity with all those things.” - Interviewee A</p>		<p>their first choice would be. So, that’s kind of where my job comes in and I try to take those foreign ingredients and make them more familiar and prepare them in a way that’s easy and showcases how you can cook it.” - Interviewee B</p>
	<p>“We are at capacity with 200 families. At least at this sight, so we are trying to figure out ways to grow” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“Well, I think, if you’re doing a good job and you’re trying to capture those stories, and we definitely do, so, in our surveys we have a preseason and postseason and we do ask for their comments. And we do get a lot of awesome stores and quotes from that and we do report back to our funders. And our funders ask us for stories and for photos and for, so, they do see the value in not asking about numbers and asking about people’s lives. And so we do do that and I also think it also really depends on how much people are willing to talk.” - Interviewee A</p>	
	<p>“Um, i know that every year, I think every year, they increase the amount of people they serve. They are trying to grow the program. I think it’s by like 25 or 50 individuals a year and they’ve been able to do that and I think that’s one of the ways to measure it overall.” - Interviewee B</p>	<p>“I think, it’s by talking to people.” - Interviewee B</p>	
	<p>“But I think the fact that people come back most weeks, if not every week is, like, a good way of measuring success.” - Interviewee C</p>	<p>“But, personally I think that just by talking to people and seeing like are the things that you use, like because they can come pick up all this stuff but are they actually going to eat it?” - Interviewee B</p>	
	<p>“So, for me personally, the organization measures</p>	<p>“The fact that, you know, Sarah has made a</p>	

	<p>success based on what we can report back to our funders and people who have given us grants.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>concerted effort to try to listen to what people are asking for and, although a lot of the time it’s out of her control but if she has the ability to get something that people have been requesting a lot, she gets that. And, like, I guess, I feel like asking people is a good way to do it. But you never know how people are feeling in the moment that you ask them. So, I can see how that can lead to, like, not a clear picture of whether or not it’s helping.” -Interviewee A</p>	

Question 4: What indicators does this program use to measure success? Are some more accurate than others?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
<p>“Like, are we giving them enough food for each week? So that’s where the total number of pounds come in. And then it’s like well, what are we giving them? Are we just giving them potatoes, are we giving them 26 different crops over 16 weeks.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“Probably, it’s like total pounds of food gleaned, number of families enrolled, uh, and number of organizations enrolled. Um, number of farms that we worked with, uh, we report on how many different crops we were able to distribute. So, we were able to give people a diverse collection.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“When, if you were just like, oh we gleaned 60,000 pounds of food, you’d be like okay well I want more information and that would leave me wanting more. I think together, yes.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“So are they even getting eaten? Those kinds of questions also need to be asked because we are doing a great thing here, giving people food, but are they actually eating it and enjoying it are very important questions to ask too. Do they know how to cook these foods or prepare them in ways that are beneficial to their bodies and their souls, you know?” - Interviewee B</p>
<p>“To help alleviate as much food insecurity as possible, and even if it’s not food insecurity, help improve nutrient deficiencies or anything these people might be struggling with.” - Interviewee B</p>	<p>“Because, it’s like okay it’s great that we are feeding 200 people but are we feeding them a high volume of food?” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“I don’t know I think it is really important to talk to these people.” - Interviewee B</p>	
	<p>“It is very important to serve more households and I think that is always</p>	<p>“ But if you’re not talking to the people and asking if these things are actually</p>	

	the goal.” - Interviewee B	making a difference in their lives then you don’t really know.” - Interviewee B	
	“Oh yes, so it’s obviously very important to reach more households” - Interviewee B	“Because, food is more than just nutrition, it’s also about enjoyment. And those things can’t be examined just by the numbers.” - Interviewee B	

Question 5: How is this program achieving its goals?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
<p>“Like, there are also plenty of people i’m trying to convert into being vegetable eaters but it’s also one of those things where people are just not as interested in eating fresh food, so they don’t necessarily see this as a huge resource because this food is unfamiliar to them.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“We’ll have a meeting with both of my bosses and we’ll make the plan for the next year and set the goals for the next year.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“Um, if you are looking at something else and we happen to have some of it in our cooler, like, we’ll try to get it for you and try to meet everybodys kind of individual needs to the best degree that we can.” - Interviewee C</p>	<p>“That’s the other thing like the reason that we partner with other agencies is because people were showing up there were already asking for help. So if we are partnering with other clinics and other agencies and nonprofits who are serving people in need then we know that they have already made the most important step which is reaching out to someone for help.” - Interviewee A</p>
	<p>“But, we’ll decide, like, alright it’s 200 families. Like last year it was 200 families, 60,000 pounds of food, and then we just, then I just, make that the goal and I just do it. Like it’s kind of hard to, like I just do more outreach and do more tabling in the spring to get people signed up, I build stronger relationships with people at the WIC office, at the community health center. So a lot of he ways that we enrol families is through a referral process.” - Interviewee A</p>		<p>“You really never have to say no to people. And, like, there are obviously guidelines for how much each individual is aloud to take, but, in most cases if you need more you can take more.” - Interviewee C</p>
	<p>“So if I know that I need to enroll 25 more people im just like, on it and trying to get people to know that this is happening.</p>		<p>“People occasionally will come in here not knowing what it is or vaguely knowing what it is and not being signed up for it and</p>

	<p>Because one of the biggest ways that we met our goals is just increasing awareness in the community because it's amazing because a lot, people are still like, 'i had no idea that this existed', and that's our responsibility to make sure people know that this does exist." - Interviewee A</p>		<p>they are curious about joining the CSA. If there are spots left, and when that happens Sarah almost always lets people take food regardless of whether or not they're signed up. And so, just the fact that if someone comes here and wants or needs food they will be fed is really nice." - Interviewee C</p>
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Question 6: In what ways could this program improve?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
	<p>"But we also know that, one, we are at the bottom of a hill, two, we're not directly on a public transportation line. I think it would be great if there was a public bus route that just came up and down the intervale and people could bring their bikes." - Interviewee A</p>	<p>"We think that nature and recreation can be just as nourishing as eating food that we grow here. So we want people to take a walk and walk along the river and identify trees and the plants and, um, the more we can expose people to our farms and are campus of recreation here, the better.: - Interviewee A</p>	<p>"And we work with them already, but it could be neat if we work with a specific physician or specific team of physicians and they refer patients directly to our program, and then those patients get to pick up their share directly at the community health center. That way we still get to keep our CSA share here and we also get to alleviate the barrier for some folks who struggle with access to transportation." - Interviewee A</p>
	<p>"But not only are we down a hill but we don't even have a sidewalk on the road that makes people feel safe while they are walking." - Interviewee A</p>	<p>"We like that they come here because we get to create the experience, like we are in control of the pickup and how dignified and organized and, uh, accessible that it is." - Interviewee A</p>	<p>"And also, we could probably try to have the community health center identify people who do not have transportation, and have those people be the ones that pickup. So that is one of the biggest ways that we can improve." - Interviewee A</p>
	<p>"So there's a lot of play and I think that the biggest way we can improve is trying to figure out how to tackle this transportation issue. And one of my ideas is maybe we do work with so many clinics that maybe we can sort of have an incentive program for the clinic and agency</p>		

	<p>where, if they can refer 10 people or 20 people to us, to the program, then those 10 or 20 people can pick up their share at the clinic." - Interviewee A</p>		
	<p>"And, also we just need to figure out how we can grow and how we can feed more people while still maintaining sanity and we don't want to feed more people but have, uh, increase the number of people but have the quality decrease or like, the experience that we are hoping to create, we want to maintain. So, but that's one of the biggest ways we can improve." - Interviewee A</p>		
	<p>"Sometimes people are confused because we have the household share and we have the organizational share." - Interviewee B</p>		
	<p>"And, um, it's very hard because we don't want to go and take food away from somebody. Especially considering what this program is all about, we don't want to take food away from anybody. But, we want to make sure that everybody is getting their fair share, like that's the name of the program. But when some people take way too much, by the time 530 roes around some days we are out of stuff. That's one big area." - Interviewee B</p>		
	<p>"And then another thing that was brought to our attention with the people's garden that we have, it's not accessible to everybody in the same way. We have a lot of older people and disabled people who are part of this program and they a lot of</p>		

	<p>the times can't get down there or in there with a wheelchair, like in between the rows of crops. And they aren't able to bend over and pick, so, someone brought up the idea of raised beds instead of just having things on the ground, which i thought was a good thing that could be considered." - Interviewee B</p>		
<p>"And the last thing i could think of would be, um, just the selection of crops that we have, isn't always equal week to week. Like some weeks we have so much stuff that we have to bring in more tables and we leave here and there's still a ton that we bring to the food bank that's left over. But sometimes we have to take stuff from, like, the cooler that isn't supposed to be ours and give it to people because we don't have enough." - Interviewee B</p>	<p>"Maybe being in a different location because this is not accessible for people who don't have cars or disabled in any way because you have to walk down that massive hill on a main road adn then walk back up with like, 15-20 pounds of fresh produce is super tough. But i don't know how they could get around that because we still have to have access to like the farm and to the cooler to keep all the stuff from getting disgusting, so. There's a few thing that aren't anyone's fault. Like, having more food selection is something i wish was better." - Interviewee B</p>		
<p>"But, at the end of the day we only have access to what the farmer's are allowing us to access. So it's not something Sarah can control, or anyone can control it just varies week to week. Bu this week we only have tomatoes and salad greens. So we really have to supplement with other things that just happen to be here and also with the people's garden which has really helped us out in the weeks like this week when we don't have a lot to offer, just for a little more variety."- Interviewee B</p>	<p>"I've noticed that people don't really pay attention to the signage which is really frustrating for us." - Interviewee C</p>		
	<p>"I don't know, everyone is</p>		

	<p>here to get food and that there's also a language barrier with some people so you have to be understanding if they don't read the signage." - Interviewee C</p>		
	<p>"And, just one other thing is, like, i've noticed at times when there's other stuff here set up from the Food Hub, people sometimes go and take things that aren't ours. And so, there's really no fault there because it's maybe just like a communication issue or just anything like people being opportunistic." - Interviewee C</p>		

Question 7: What is this organization doing to be flexible to the varying demand and need among food insecure populations?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
<p>"Some weeks we have tons of stuff to offer and other weeks we have a few thing to offer, but we try and supplement that by allowing people to go in the garden. And so, I think that with the amount of food that they have, they try and make sure it reaches as many hand's as possible" - Interviewee C</p>	<p>"Yea, well one thing that, like we said we have 200 people enrolled, is that we are pretty flexible if you can't come for pickup."- Interviewee A</p>	<p>"You know i try to check in on people if I haven't heard from them or seen them in a while." - Interviewee A</p>	<p>"We do let folks stay enrolled even if they are having a hard time making it to the pickup. Um, that being said, we can definitely more flexible." - Interviewee A</p>
	<p>"So, um, we're flexible in that way in like as long as you are communicating to me why you can't make it or 'i'm going to be out of town for four weeks' like we are pretty flexible to uh allowing people to skip a week or skip a couple of weeks." - Interviewee A</p>		<p>"But then if you do that for like 10 people, now your life is a lot harder and your job is more difficult and it becomes a lot of now im managing a lot of people's schedules rather than just wanting to create a time frame when they can come and most people do come. So we could definitely figure out ways to be more flexible but remain efficient and organized." - Interviewee A</p>

	<p>“If we have another pickup downtown that’s like so much easier for people to get to.” - Interviewee A</p>		<p>“Yea, I do think so. I think, like, when we have extra things, we put them out and we tell people to take as much as you can eat.” - Interviewee C</p>
	<p>“There’s this thing where like you also need to respect the time of the people who work there, um, and they need the weekends off to be with their family and maintain their life, so um, it’s a real challenge and a balance to be flexible to the food insecure population but also maintain what you need to do at your workplace to stay efficient and, I don’t know on top of things.” - Interviewee A</p>		
	<p>“I know they try to grow this program every year like I said. I can’t remember if it’s 25 or 50 more households but, they try to grow it every year. But there is a cap. It’s not like as many people as they want can sign up because i’m sure if this was unlimited and there was not a cap on it it would be much more popular. But, i don’t really know.” - Interviewee B</p>		

Question 8: How is this program alleviating food insecurity?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
<p>“Yea, I think it’s direct and that’s one of the things I like about this program is that we know people need healthy food so we are literally giving them it for free. S it is direct, food insecurity is not having full access to the right food, and I’m like directly giving it to you. It is, like, sort of a band-aid solution to a larger issue. Where like in a perfect world, farmers</p>	<p>“I think the fact that people come back every week is an indicator of its success”. - Interviewee C</p>	<p>“And, like, I’m sure maybe Casey touched on it, but her recipes, like she’ll have people come to her the next week and like, tell her how they made ehr recipes or loved it and I think that’s such a good way of seeing that it’s actually having an impact. And that not only are people getting these vegetables but they’re also getting inspired to</p>	<p>“It’s like hard to see for sure because other than this two or three hour span once a week, I don’t really get to see what people do with their food or whether or not it’s utilized.” - Interviewee C</p>

<p>would be able to sell everything that they grow, there wouldn't be waste on a farm, and people of all income levels would be able to afford food and healthy food." - Interviewee A</p>		<p>use them. And, yea. Aw I love this family that's coming in right now they are so sweet. I see them on the truck as well. But, um, yea." - Interviewee C</p>	
<p>"A direct service in the form of free fruits and vegetables every week for 16 weeks. And so, you know we don't provide meat, we don't provide eggs, we don't provide grains, we just provide produce. And ike, you know it's not really the best stuff. Like you want to eat lots of fruits and vegetables but you also need other things to make a diet healthy. But if i can provide a weekly supply of fruits and vegetables so that a family doesn't have to go to the farmers market, or worry about going to the farmer's market, and just worry about having fresh produce then I feel like that's successful." - Interviewee A</p>			
<p>"Like you know, people are going home with produce that they wouldn't have or wouldn't be able to afford otherwise." - Interviewee A</p>			
<p>"A lot of the foods we offer aren't really calorically dense. So I don't know how much it's actually impacting that aspect. Because if you went home and you ate all the food you got here today it would probably be 300 calories maximum. But there are a lot of nutrients and vitamins and minerals in those 300 calories that are very valuable and I know that a lot of people would otherwise not have access to, so that's very important. And food isn't</p>			

<p>all about calories but when you're food insecure those calories do matter to make sure you're getting enough in the day. Um, so I don't know if it's so much about calorie density as it is nutrient variety. And I think in that sense this program is alleviating some of that stress." - Interviewee B</p>			
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Question 9: What have some obstacles been and how could the program do a better job of overcoming such obstacles?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
<p>"But, um more so because we do have a lot of seniors in our fair share, some older folks, and we do have a lot of folks who have specific health issues. And who are on certain medications that can conflict with some of the crops that we provide." - Interviewee A</p>	<p>"But, you know, there are other physical obstacles that are harder to overcome for sure. And like, I mean obviously even, you know I find it hard to get here too. and , you know I make due but I can completely, completely understand if someone did not want to come down here if they did not have a car or a bike or a ride. That just doesn't seem to be logistically doable." - Interviewee C</p>	<p>"Oh, you know there are some new American preferences, like there are some preferred crops that new Americans would probably love. Like they love bitter melon which is like a bitter gourd, they like this loganaria squash, so it's interesting to see how a community has their own preferences. Like the poly folk really like the bitter melon, which some, diggers worth which is one of my favorite farms they grow it, and they are really good about trying to grow a few crops that are culturally appropriate for some of the community members that we have here." - Interviewee A</p>	<p>"That's why we try to provide as much education and nutrition outreach as possible because we are doing this to prevent food from going to waste and we want to make sure that when people leave with their CSA pickup and their produce that they will not be, there's not confusion with what they can do with it. And, um, their, um, they won't let it go to waste in their own home because that's a double wammy and not what we want to happen at all." - Interviewee A</p>
<p>"And, yea there's just some cultural, like, you know if you've grown up not really eating fresh food and not knowing what to do with it, that's almost cultural. Like, you've grown up with generations, maybe some generations of canned dinners and now you are food insecure and seeking access to food and now I'm handling you kale and cole robby, and you're like 'oh my god I feel like so</p>		<p>"So there's just like a real mixed level of living situations and life experience that gets people to where they are now. And we are just sort of figuring out as we go and just, you know because there are just so many different cultural experiences that, you know we can't meet everyone's needs but we try." - Interviewee A</p>	<p>"Also, understanding that people are coming from a spectrum of housing situations. Some people live in shelters and have a communal kitchen that is not theirs and they don't have a lot of refrigeration. We do have some folks without a home right now." - Interviewee A</p>

<p>foreign in this world', so like that's a cultural thing that we are always trying to work on; is, how do we make this super accessible. So we try to provide like the easiest recipes possible." - Interviewee A</p>			
		<p>"I think, um, that' it's been important for this program to feel comfortable for people." - Interviewee C</p>	<p>About transportation - "but like, a lot of people do do it. And i think that shows that it's working. Because a lot of people don't have a car or a bike or whatever and they still come here and get vegetables." - Interviewee C</p>
		<p>"You know, people are not made to feel like they have to prove they are in need of this. So i think that provides some comfort and that helps with an obstacle." - Interviewee C</p>	
		<p>" It's incredibly important to create a comfortable environment for people." - Interviewee C</p>	

2. Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf Responses

Question 1: What is the goal of this program?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
<p>"The goal of our program is to make sure people are getting good, nutritious, high quality food and that they have enough for them to live full lives with full bellies." - Interviewee B</p>		<p>"The goal of this program is to help people, especially low income, to make it through the day. So what i can say, a lot of people now, they say the housing is very very expensive and it's hard for them to save money for food. So that is what we help them with" - Interviewee C</p>	<p>"The goal would be to provide emergency food assistance as well as opportunities for people to better themselves, and, um not have to utilize our services." - Interviewee A</p>

<p>“Whether it be someone in severe poverty and severe food insecurity or whether it be someone who might have enough food stamps or money to get by with the week but won’t be nutrient rich food, they can kind of fill in the gaps here.” - Interviewee B</p>			

Question 3: In your own opinion, what is the best way to measure success within your program?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
<p>“And I want to make sure they can come in and enjoy the fresh produce that we have and salvaged food and the canned goods.” - Interviewee B</p>	<p>“There are actually, excuse me, 20,000 people in Chittenden county who are food insecure. Um, so that increased from 11 years ago. It used to be less than that. So, we’re not seeing a decrease in the amount of people that are coming in. And give the current political climate, we are not really anticipating, um, we are anticipating it being worse’. - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“But, it’s really the direct contact you have with people and you hear people sharing their stories, like you know ‘I was going through a hard time and I did this program and now I have a job or am starting a small business’, or even just ‘I’m able to prepare healthier meals for my family’. - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“We want to move closer to that direction as far as providing people with skills and opportunities to better themselves so that they can get a job afterwards. And not only get a job but just get that support and encouragement that there are opportunities for them. So we want to move in that direction.” - Interviewee A</p>
<p>“Um, and then also of course folks who have kids and mouths to feed. Their measure of success would be full bellies.” - Interviewee B</p>	<p>“We’re measuring how many meals are served and how many people are being helped.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“There’s no stigma, it’s just a good community atmosphere. So we try to measure in those ways.” - Interviewee A</p>	
	<p>“So, we have a database. So once we know you’re in this program we are going to ask you questions. About your job, how much you’re making, checking the income if you qualify because we have an income guideline.” Interviewee C</p>	<p>“I think, realistically, measuring success has to look at the person rather than just statistics and numbers.” - Interviewee B</p>	
		<p>“I want to make sure they live their life fully then I think they have the right to do that.” - Interviewee B</p>	

Question 4: What indicators does this program use to measure success? Are some indicators more accurate than others?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
	<p>“So the amount of food that we are receiving. The amount of time people are putting in here as volunteers, so those hours. And, those in-kind donations are also valuable.” - Interviewee A</p>		<p>“So, the goal obviously is to have people do an internship, they graduate and the goal is to have them get a job. But, um, are they able to keep those jobs? Um, there’s also a college credit offered through that so are they going off to higher education?” - Interviewee A</p>
	<p>“How many meals are being packaged.” - Interviewee A</p>		
	<p>“We are working with a pretty small staff, but ideally we would be kind of keeping closer track of that.” - Interviewee A</p>		
	<p>“We have our intake system over there which, when you talk to edi he can talk more about that, but you know number of families that are coming in from each town”. - Interviewee A</p>		
	<p>“So look more at the outcome of how many volunteer hours we’ve gotten, um making sure the space is clean, the shelves are full when we have food, that we’re using the food to its fullest, when food comes in that i’m able to communicate with volunteers that this is how we are going to make the food last and stretch it.” - Interviewee B</p>		
	<p>“We need volunteers to run smoothly.” - Interviewee B</p>		
	<p>“When we are fully staffed and have enough volunteers who feel comfortable and safe to</p>		

	<p>make decisions for themselves, like the volunteers who are empowered and feel comfortable, our space is much more pleasant and a happy place to be.” - Interviewee B</p>		
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Question 5: How is this program achieving its goals?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
<p>“We are trying to get local foods as much as possible.” Interviewee C</p>	<p>“The number of people is increasing now. And, once the number increases we have to see how we are going to attract more people to donate more food. So that’s why we, sometimes, organize the food drives.” Interviewee C</p>	<p>“When people walk in and are greeted properly.” - Interviewee B</p>	
<p>“So, now we have a diverse people coming here. Some people, you know, they don’t eat meat. And once we ask people for those donations and get that food we need to feed our guests. and , uh, I think that’s the way we achieve our goals.” Interviewee C</p>		<p>“I mean, I have to say volunteers again because if we recognize when someone comes in and comes into a very welcoming space and everything runs smoothly.” - Interviewee B</p>	
<p>“The quality of food.” - Interviewee B</p>			
<p>“If we have a variety of food, so um, we buy food from the food bank and make sure we have some staple pantry items.” - Interviewee B</p>			
<p>“But when food drives and donations come in, we have more of a variety. So instead of people just having the option to grab carrots as their vegetable, they can grab peas or beets or wax beans and people are much more happy if it feels like a more authentic shopping experience. And it’s not about sustenance, but about a crave and desire</p>			

and creativity with food.” - Interviewee B			
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Question 6: In what ways could this program improve?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
<p>“So, most the groceries we have on the shelf are canned foods, and during the summer we do have some produce, we do have some veggies and good bread. But the dairy, we don’t have a lot. It’s too expensive, you know, and sometimes it’s hard. So if we improve that so you know you can come to the food shelf once or twice a month to have a dairy product then that could be good.”</p>	<p>“This is, you know kind of a low income area, there are businesses and things moving in. So we think it’s good to stay here, but ideally i think we would have another location. Maybe in Williston or further out, to make it easier for people to access it.” - Interviewee A</p>		<p>“I think our cultural competency could improve. We need to have more adequate signs and ways to communicate with people who don’t speak english.” - Interviewee B</p>
	<p>“Yea so i think ideally we want to move away from this model, get out into the community more.” - Interviewee A</p>		<p>“I mean, I think there are flaws with our daily bread and produce program. Because some people really do take that seriously and come every day. And they’re following rules and they are allowed to do that, bu then when people want to use it as more of a way to make ends meet, there isn’t as much for them to choose from because of the folks who are utilizing it every day.” - Interviewee B</p>
	<p>In reference to Good Food Truck - “ideally we would have at least one more truck. But, I’m trying to think, we do it 3 nights a week but i’m sure there are more meal sights that we could be serving at.”- Interviewee A</p>		
	<p>“I think our space also limits us, it’s too small.” - Interviewee B</p>		

Question 7: What is the organization doing to be flexible to the varying demand and need among food insecure populations?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
<p>“It used to be if you rent or own a home you can come in once a month for groceries. So that’s like the dry and canned goods as well as cooler and freezer products. And then, every day you can come in for bread and produce. And, then if you’re homeless with roof like if you’re staying with a friend, you can come in every other week. And then if you’re homeless you can come in once a week for groceries.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“I think we would like to have kind of the daily food separate from groceries. Because really, it’s just not the same thing. And, it’s just hard we are dealing with small space and it can be a lot to deal with sometimes.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“So the food shelf pulls in, people have to come out and meet their neighbors, and enjoy something kind of hip and cool, and try new food.” - Interviewee B</p>	<p>“So, that’s changed and you know it’s really, if you go out there and look at what is on our shelves a lot of that isn’t helpful. If you’re homeless and don’t have a kitchen you don’t have a way to prepare food, you know dry spaghetti isn’t going to help you.” - Interviewee A</p>
<p>“I think we also want to have healthier food out there. Ideally we would have, you know we get a lot of the canned goods, which we have all kinds of stuff in there.”- Interviewee A</p>	<p>“Um, the growth that we’ve experienced is huge. If you think about our homebound program where we are delivering food to people’s houses, it’s 130 people in Chittenden County.” - Interviewee B</p>	<p>“I think that, uh, it’s hard to say because everybody who is coming because they have their own situation.” Interviewee C</p>	<p>“You know so we, I think we would ideally have sort of, you know we have our cooler right out here which is easily accessible for folks when they are coming in to get their produce. Having sandwiches, salads, just like ready to go food, people don’t have to worry about preparing anything.” - Interviewee A</p>
<p>“But, uh, yea ideally we would be purchasing more nutritious food. But it kind of goes along with, like, well we can purchase more of the unhealthy food or have less of the very healthy food.” - Interviewee A</p>		<p>“So, you know, it depends. Sometimes we see a lot of people here and they have a reason to be here. And sometimes they don’t. We just see the numbers going down. It depends on their situation.” Interviewee C</p>	
<p>“You know we want to really emphasize health and wellness and produce and fresh foods.” - Interviewee A</p>			
<p>“But at the same time we’re not here to police what people eat. We want to, you know, maybe if you’re having a bad day sometimes you want a cookie. We aren’t here to say that you can only eat kale. So we try to offer</p>			

<p>both.” - Interviewee A</p>			
<p>“You know we have people with, we have a pretty high immigrant and refugee population that comes in, and they aren’t necessarily going to recognize what a can of ravioli is.but, we try to get those bulk donations of beans and rice and sugar and those kinds of things that we’ll package, um, individually package and put out so that people from varying backgrounds have at least some stuff they can take.” - Interviewee A</p>			

Question 8: How is this program alleviating food insecurity?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
<p>“We’re not just providing calories, we’re actually providing nutritious, wholesome food.” - Interviewee B</p>	<p>“And we’re also working on working with other nonprofits in the area. Ideally we would have a more coordinated group effort with, you know COX whose focused on homelessness, because you know we serve the same populations.” - Interviewee A</p>		<p>“But even then it’s hard, because people need more support than just graduating from CKA and getting a job.” - Interviewee A</p> <p>* CKA = a program within the food shelf, trains people for job opportunities, etc.</p>
<p>“We’re able to take in and welcome donations of fresh food.” - Interviewee B</p>	<p>“So, and getting, I think, if getting people who have no idea about food insecurity or anything about it, getting them more involved in the conversation.” - Interviewee A</p>		
<p>“And those volunteers, what they have been trying to do is gather food from local stores and contacting the local farmers, uh, the local restaurants, to include ways that food, which some people can use. So we have a strategy to gather all this local food and bring it here to the food shelf.” Interviewee C</p>	<p>“Um, and, like I said I think if we had, you know, another facility with more staff and more money we could really target people who are further out in Chittenden County who really can’t access our services. Um, so that would be ideal” - Interviewee A</p>		

<p>“What we are trying to do now is have good food on the shelf. We do the fodo drive were we ask people to bring super low sodium, like good quality food. Or local veggies and produce is good. So we are trying to be, not selective but to get good food.” - Interviewee C</p>	<p>“So, we have this, uh, program which works with a lot of volunteers.”- Interviewee C</p>		
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Question 9: What have some obstacles been and how could the program do a better job of overcoming such obstacles?

Health	Growth	Experience	Utilization
	<p>“We struggle with the fact that there is a lack of political will. This is a very solvable problem. There’s so much food to go around.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“But sometimes people feel like they need to explain why they are here. Um, and it’s nice when we can see that just a little thing like being nice to someone or smiling and asking how their day is or offering them some food can really help them with what they’re going through.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“But even then it’s hard, because people need more support than just graduating from CKA and getting a job. You know there’s so much, there’s child care and you know yea there’s just so much that goes along with that.” - Interviewee A</p>
	<p>“And we’re also working on working with other nonprofits in the area. Ideally we would have a more coordinated group effort.” - Interviewee A</p>	<p>“Um, lately, I’m in a place where I want to have more community events and have different communities share their skills and space. Different themes, different topics, encouraging the folks who visit the food shelf to think of it more like a membership space, um, which sounds simply but actually building that ownership I think is going to be an art. But i’m hopeful that we are going to start to address it.” - Interviewee B</p>	<p>“So the big one is, uh, with our guests who are immigrants. So we have a language barrier. So, most of the time, they don’t speak english. So it can be difficult to get the information across.” And we don’t know what kind of staple they need, so we can help them. That’s a problem.” - Interviewee C</p>
	<p>“So, and getting, I think if getting people who have no idea about food insecurity or anything about it, getting them more involved in the conversation. Because, if we are all contributing tax dollars to this how can we really make a different in</p>	<p>“Asking people what they would want a membership to look like. Of course, not making assumptions about what people want or what’s best for them.” - Interviewee B</p>	<p>“And another one is that we have a lot of people that just, don’t have food and they’re not going because they are ashamed to go to the food shelf.” - Interviewee C</p>

	<p>these people's lives? This is an issue that impacts all of us." - Interviewee A</p>		
	<p>"I think lack of political will would be the biggest obstacle. Um, and like I said i think that if we had, you know, another facility with more staff and more money we could really target people who are further out in Chittenden County who really can't access our services. Um, so that would be ideal." - Interviewee A</p>		<p>"We still have some people who are not able to get to the food shelf and they need food." - Interviewee C</p>
	<p>"And for the food shelf, now we have a program where the facility is too small. So it's hard to move food and we need more room to make that easy." - Interviewee C</p>		

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