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Development of a Sustainable Volunteer Model to Address Food Insecurity

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BACKGROUND

- Food insecurity is a predictor of poor health outcomes and a critical social determinant of health¹
- Food shelves serve as a community hub to link clients with other health-related and social services
- 26% of Winooski residents live at or below the poverty level
- 10% of the Winooski population (662 people) rely on the Food Shelf
 - There has been a 27% increase in clientele over 2017-2018
- This Food Shelf would benefit from additional capacity to address food insecurity and connect clients to other needed resources

Project Goal: Determine Winooski Food Shelf's greatest need(s) and implement a sustainable intervention to ensure the capacity to meet them.

METHODS

Two phase approach:

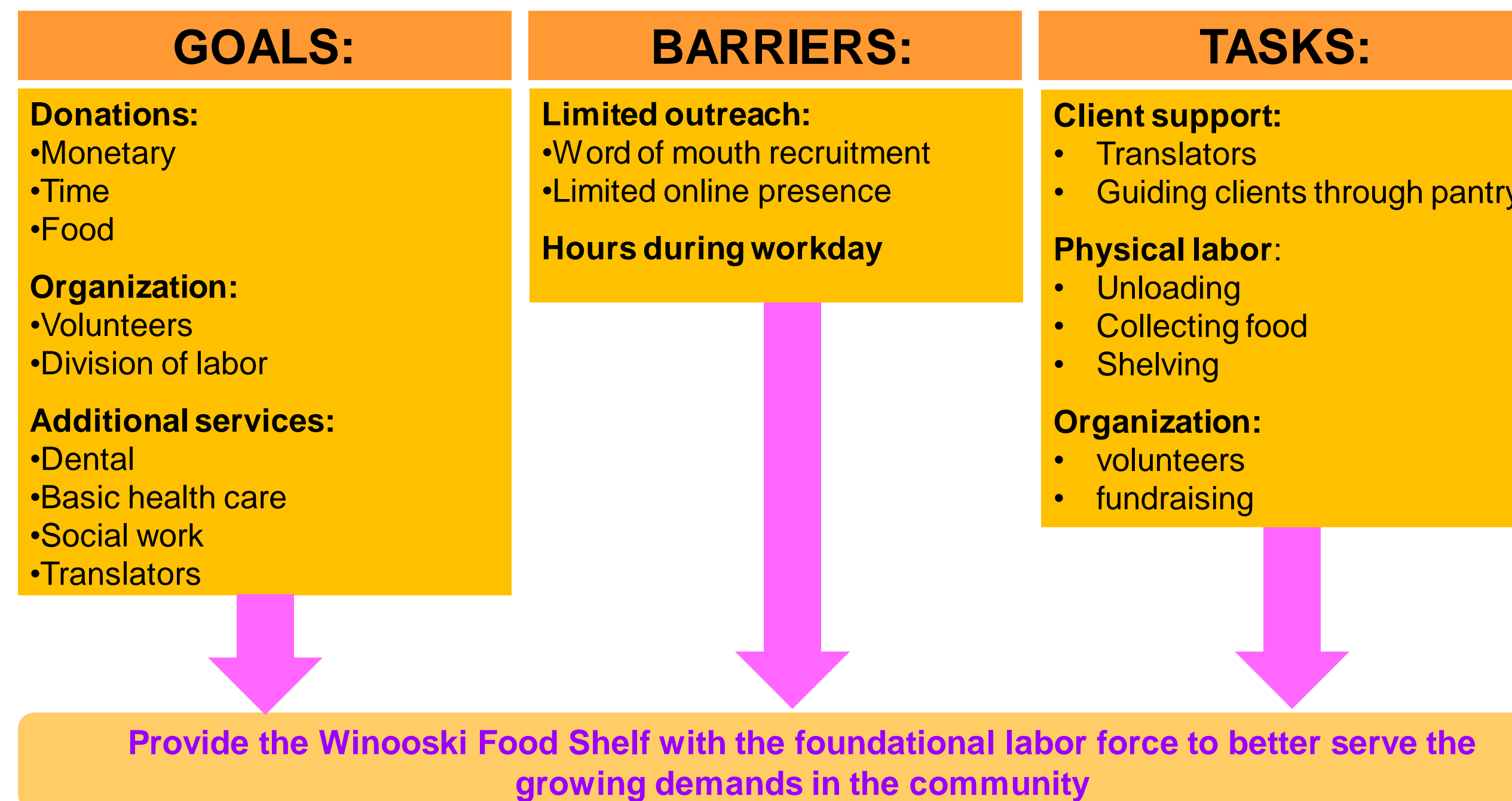
1. Collect data to determine greatest needs
 - 11 structured interviews using open-ended questions with leadership and volunteers
 - Thematic analysis of qualitative responses²
2. Create and implement a sustainable volunteer model to address major needs
 - Development of online scheduling system, online volunteer application, in-person training

References

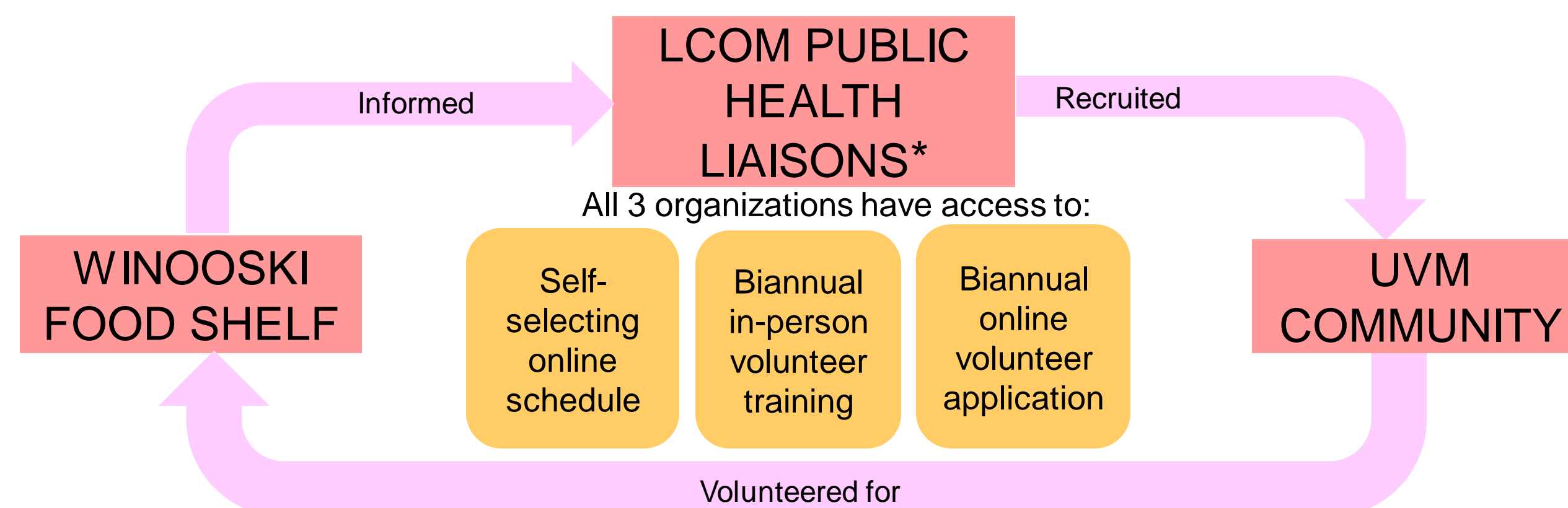
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RESULTS

1. Major themes:



2. Sustainable volunteer model:



* In time, we anticipate that Winooski Food Shelf and the UVM community will continue the volunteer program partnership without LCOM's involvement

DISCUSSION

- Volunteers are essential to achieving organizational goals and improving infrastructure of non-for profits
- The population at the Winooski Food Shelf is growing and therefore needs improved volunteer recruitment methods to match needs
- Developing university-community partnerships can help to efficiently address community needs³
- Research supports the value of service learning to both students and the community⁴
- Using our research we designed and implemented a volunteer system, partnered with UVM and recruited 16 volunteers
- Our system for sustainable volunteer recruitment with UVM will allow the Food Shelf to address future goals

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain partnership with UVM to continue volunteer recruitment
- Utilize volunteers to connect clients to other needed health and social services
- Encourage volunteers to take on regular, recurrent tasks determined by leadership to establish a better division of labor
- Use student volunteers to maximize electronic communication and record-keeping