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Foundation For Essential Needs

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Introduction

Welcome to the **Capturing Community Voice in Food Shelf Decision Making Handbook.** This guide was created for food shelf leaders who are looking to challenge the status quo of *how* decisions are made at an organizational level, as well as *who* is included in those conversations. This handbook, and the tools within it are meant to guide food shelf leadership in capturing shopper voice in decision making, and to empower you to take action based on the results of the tools outlined here, and your organization's MN Food Shelf Survey results.

A quick note on terminology: FFEN uses the term "shopper" to refer to individuals who visit your food shelf. Other organizations may refer to shoppers as "clients", "neighbors", "customers", and "community members".

Historically, food shelf volunteers, leaders, and board members have had the most prominent voices in food shelf decision making. Prioritizing shopper voice strives to **center the perspectives and lived experiences** of those who use a food shelf's services throughout the organization's decision making process. The process of **honoring shopper voice should be ongoing, evolving, intentional, and transparent**. The process should rely on respectful and reciprocal feedback between shoppers, food shelf leadership, and volunteers. By prioritizing shopper voice, food shelves **empower those most impacted by organizational decisions** to participate in creating a food shelf culture that best serves its community's unique needs.

It's important to take a moment to acknowledge that the work being asked of food shelf leaders through this handbook is new, uncharted territory in the hunger relief sector. Breaking new ground is often uncomfortable, uncertain, and undoubtedly difficult. Managing a food shelf is a lot of work all by itself, which may not leave you with a lot of extra time to fully engage with this resource. However, you're encouraged to treat this as a flexible, living document, engaging with it as much or as little as you need, making adjustments based on your organization's specific needs. The end goal is to help you better engage and serve your community members.

Learning to unlearn conditioned and systematic ways of thinking, being, and operating can feel scary, but it's important to remember that lasting change only comes from intense and intentional self-reflection, and a commitment to making changes. Trust, mutual respect, and genuine community engagement can only

happen when we work to build bridges between those with lived experiences (the shopper) and those who make the organizational decisions (managers, volunteers, board members).

So, why does capturing community voice matter?

Impact Stories

> *"Here at Community Pathways one of our four areas of Strategic Focus from 2023-2025 is 'Shopper Experience.' There are a variety of components to that, including accessibility, and the question of 'Can you get here to access food easily within the normal activities in your daily life?' This was particularly important to us with regards to the population of migrant workers who join our community each summer. With the help of one of our board members who works as a liaison between employers and seasonal workers we asked for feedback from the families on how we could better serve them.*
>
> *We learned that even though we were open 5 days a week for a total of 34 hours, they still could not get here. Their work hours were 7am-7pm so we were simply not open before or after work for them to shop. With this knowledge we added Tuesday nights from 5-8pm to our hours and it was an instant game changer. We currently serve between 60-80 families on Tuesday nights and during the summer over half of them were migrant families who could not visit us otherwise. Their response to this change was humbling. One of our favorite comments was we were "angels" for adding those evening hours on Tuesdays. It was such a hit for all of our shoppers in fact, that we decided to make it a permanent change not just a summer time change. This is just one example of how powerful incorporating the shopper's voice has been for us."*
>
> *– Dom Korbel, Executive Director*
> *Community Pathways of Steele County*

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FFEN's Why

The Foundation for Essential Needs is dedicated to reshaping the Minnesota Hunger Relief System into something that all shoppers can trust to predictably offer healthy food options and a dignified experience. Part of our efforts towards this vision is to empower food shelf leaders to capture the voices of their shoppers in food shelf decision making. In doing so, we hope to support food shelves in building a foundation of trust and community engagement among their shoppers.

It's important to acknowledge that there is a power dynamic between shoppers and food shelf volunteers/staff, which can otherwise be referred to as "don't bite the hand that feeds you." This can create a space where shoppers may not feel empowered or comfortable speaking out about what they need or being able to provide feedback. Awareness of these power dynamics can help us challenge them and create a space where shoppers and food shelf volunteers/staff can collaborate and share feedback together.

In developing these tools, FFEN intentionally centered questions challenging how decisions are currently being made at food shelves, and which voices are included in the decision making process.

This handbook was created thanks in part to funding from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota's Center for Prevention.

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Reflective and Guiding Questions For Food Shelf Leadership:

This section includes a selection of “digging deeper questions” designed to spark internal reflection, and to support you as a food shelf leader to push past barriers surrounding prioritizing shopper voice, whether those barriers exist in real life or only within our minds.

Through these questions, you will be pushed, challenged, and possibly even uncomfortable in order to think past your usual and automatic ways of thinking. The ultimate goal is to encourage food shelf leaders to build stronger, more empathetic and mutually respectful relationships with your shoppers, and to encourage your volunteers to do the same.

Created with a mind towards folks who may have never engaged with questions like these before, these questions are meant to be a jumping off point for deeper reflection. If you’ve already done the work and have your answers to these questions, you can go to the appendix for the full list of questions and additional resources. Feel free to write your own questions too, and even send them along to programs@ffen.org to be included in future versions of the handbook.

We encourage food shelf leaders to sit with these questions and write down your reflections[1] using our worksheet before you start using tools to gather shopper feedback and after you have completed an event to compare your responses. Want to take your engagement with these questions to the next level? Try interacting with Harvard’s Implicit Association Test before completing the reflective worksheet.

The full list of questions can be found in the appendix.

[1] Did you know that multiple studies have shown that writing things down helps us better organize our thoughts and improve memory retention?

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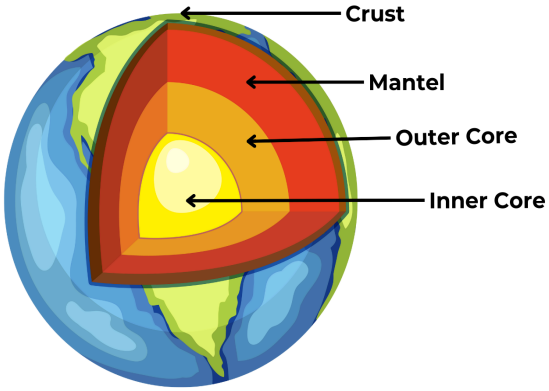

Crust - Just like the crust of the Earth, these questions are meant to be surface level, and able to be answered without much reflection.

Mantel - Another layer down, and the pressure is increased. These questions require a deeper level of reflection, and a willingness to sit with discomfort.

Core - Core questions aim to get at the root of how we think and interact with others, and to challenge judgements or assumptions about others you may not even know you have.

Crust Questions

- What is your "why?" for including shopper voice in organizational decision making?
- How do you currently incorporate shopper voice and feedback?
    - What are you currently doing well in terms of prioritizing shopper feedback?
- How are decisions currently being made at your organization?
    - Who makes these decisions?
    - When are organizational decisions usually made (ex. During board meetings, by yourself as a food shelf leader, etc)?

Mantel Questions

- What barriers or resistance might you face from volunteers, board members, donors, food banks, etc. when looking to make changes?
- What are some changes that you'd like to see at your food shelf?
    - What are some things that shoppers have expressed they wished were different at your food shelf?
- How does prioritizing shopper voice in decision making align with your organization's goals?

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    - What are three ways you can explain this alignment to your staff and volunteers to encourage buy-in?

Core Questions

- What judgements/assumptions might your shoppers or volunteers have about you as an individual? What judgment/assumptions might they have about your organization?
- What judgements/assumptions might you have about people who shop at food shelves?
- How might these judgements/assumptions get in the way of building trusting and respectful relationships?
- What helps you personally to feel safe and heard in a conversation?
    - In what ways are you creating a welcoming, safe environment for your shoppers to share feedback?
- How confident and committed are you to making organizational changes to capture community voice on a scale from 1 to 10?
- What would your organization look like if you met your stated goals for making these changes?

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Facilitation and Conversation Guides

This section includes a collection of tips and guiding principles for holding successful conversations at an organizational, community, and individual level.

We all talk to others every day in all sorts of situations, but how often do we practice being fully present and engaged during these conversations? As the leader of a non-profit organization it's not uncommon to have so much on your plate that meaningful discussions can be replaced by rushed conversations done while multi-tasking. Yet, in order to really connect with your volunteers and shoppers, setting aside time and space to have these more purposeful and unhurried conversations is essential.

Facilitating a group discussion gives you the chance to take your conversational and organizational skills to another level as you manage the flow and focus of group discussions of all sizes. A facilitator's job is to create a space where any shopper feels comfortable enough to share ideas, offer honest feedback, and to engage in a respectful, productive dialogue rooted in trust and the belief that their voices matter and are heard.

You are encouraged to read this section closely. Reflect on those practices you are already using, and consider what tips may be useful in your work to capture community voice.

Let's talk about empathy[2]

What is empathy? Empathy, in the simplest terms, is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person.

An example of this can look like...

A shopper expresses disappointment that you do not have a certain item they are looking for. You say "I can understand your disappointment in our not having __. I would also be frustrated by that."

[2] Words highlighted in yellow are defined in the glossary

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Why does empathy matter? Practicing empathy helps build stronger, more positive relationships centered around trust and mutual respect. Empathy can also deepen your understanding of the world and people around you. As a food shelf leader, it's important to model empathy to your shoppers and volunteers to challenge power imbalances that may exist.

How to practice empathy:

- Practice **perspective-taking** in conversations with your shoppers.
- Listen to understand, rather than respond.
- Be persistent, but kind to yourself. Sharing in the emotions of others can be rewarding, but also emotionally draining, especially during times of struggle. It's important to take time to check in with yourself regularly, and ground yourself when needed.

What's the deal with transparency?

What is transparency? Transparency is being open to provide important context for the decisions that are being made, such as barriers (funding, staffing, systemic, etc) and organizational considerations when interacting with shoppers.

Why does transparency matter? Most everyone has experienced moments where they felt like they were being talked down to, or written off by others due to their age, inexperience, or a possible power imbalance. When you're transparent, you're showing your shoppers that you respect their intelligence enough to be straightforward and open with them, rather than dodging their questions or giving vague answers because they "wouldn't understand". Practicing transparency can also help soften the blow when saying "No," to something because you are able to explain the *reason* behind that "No," rather than simply shutting down a concern or request without engaging in a conversation about it.

How to practice transparency:

- Be honest
- Take accountability when relevant
- Be kind when explaining external circumstances
    - ex) If a shopper comments about the limit of meat per family and this is due to a smaller or canceled delivery from your food bank, you can

explain that to them without making the food bank the villain of the story.

- If someone makes a comment about something that is systemic or out of your control, it is okay to be honest and transparent about it
    - ex) “It’s frustrating for me too that I’m not able to provide shoppers with ____. Unfortunately, our org is currently limited by ____ and _____”

Tips for Facilitation

When acting as a facilitator, it helps to think of yourself as a coach rather than a referee. Your job is to stay neutral, provide structure and energy to the conversation, and encourage the sharing of ideas rather than imposing rules or participating heavily in the discussion. As the facilitator, you help to set the tone for the whole conversation or event, in part by recognizing and reinforcing supportive behaviors and responses from participants. It’s also important to keep your facilitation style fluid. Things can go wrong, conversations can take an unexpected turn, and sometimes you have to be flexible and roll with the punches to keep the conversation from going completely off track.

Below are a few tips to keep in mind when facilitating a group discussion:

- Check in with yourself frequently to see if you are feeling emotionally regulated.
- Let the speaker drive their own story and refrain from interrupting.
- Self awareness is crucial – facilitate, don’t dominate.
- Encourage participation from all.
- Have a dedicated note taker that is a different person from the facilitator.

Expectation setting and ground rules

When planning and hosting an event, it’s important to have **clear expectations about the event’s purpose and scope**.

Examples of expectation setting include:

- Have a clear, specific goal for the event.
    - What are participants getting out of this event?
    - What is your food shelf hoping to accomplish?
- Make an agenda, and share it with participants.

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- Have a clear beginning and end time.
- Create clear ground rules for participation.

Ground rules (or Shared Agreements) help to set the tone for group events, and can be especially powerful when you allow participants to take part in creating the ground rules for an event or conversation.

Examples of ground rules include:

- FFEN's Leadership Cohort Shared Agreements
- Encourage respectful and **active listening**
- Be prepared to discuss taboo or uncomfortable issues
- Avoid side conversations
- Tolerate and teach, don't shame and blame
- Use "I" statements instead of appearing to point a finger by using "you" statements
- Explore interests, not positions
- Everyone participates, no one dominates
- Don't interrupt others
- Raise your hand before speaking

General Conversation Guidelines

Below are 10 guiding principles for positive, mutually respectful, and relevant conversations, in any setting and with any amount of people.

1. Make sure you're going into conversations with a clear goal of what kind of feedback you are looking to receive.
2. Create the right environment for vulnerability, transparency, and emotions.
3. Be mindful of your body language, tone of voice, and other nonverbal cues.
4. Set aside a few minutes at the beginning of a conversation for introductions and an **icebreaker**.
5. Take time to ensure all parties are on the same page about what the meeting is for, expectations, and ground rules.
    a. Understand and explain the difference between debate vs dialogue
6. Acknowledge feedback, even when it may be off topic or something that will need to be followed-up on at a later date, and then steer the conversation back on track.
    a. It may be helpful to keep a pen and paper handy to make note of topics to return to; this is often referred to as a "parking lot".

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7. Participate, don't dominate.
8. Paraphrase back what you're hearing to confirm comprehension and attentiveness.
9. Ask thoughtful, open-ended questions.
10. Practice not taking things personally.
    a. Check in with yourself regularly to make sure you are grounded and emotionally regulated.

- For larger group discussions:
    - Break large groups into small groups of 3-6. This helps leave space for everyone to participate and limits the possibility of **grandstanding**.
    - Have small groups chat and select one person to represent the group and report back to the larger group.

Finally, be mindful of barriers to productive and accessible communication including:

- **Jargon**
- Emotional barriers and/or taboos
- Lack of attention
- Difference in perspectives
- Disability
- Language barriers
- Cultural differences
- Expectations, assumptions, or judgments about the other person not rooted in fact

Types of Discussion Settings:

- One on one: a conversation between two people.
- Small group: a conversation of three to five people.
- Large group: a conversation of six or more people.
- Professional/formal: a conversation with a more formal structure or agenda. More formal language is used in this setting, and answers are generally more thought out. Examples of this include a work or board meeting, and formal events.
- Casual/informal: a conversation with less structure and more fluidity than a formal discussion where it is appropriate to use more informal language. Casual conversation is what happens in everyday, ordinary conversations.

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These informal conversations may include slang or abbreviations, and tend to be more spontaneous and interactive than formal discussions.

- **For group discussions of any size it is good practice to have a dedicated note taker.** In small groups it is okay to ask one of the participants to take notes if necessary, but for large group discussions there should a dedicated facilitator and a note taker[3] from the food shelf organizing the event. **It can be helpful to take notes on a whiteboard or flipchart that all participants can see throughout the session.**

Example Facilitation Guides

Example guide for a 75 minute **group discussion with meal**

Time	Purpose	Agenda
15 minutes	Get food and settle in	Everyone gets a plate and finds a table • Encourage folks to sit with people they've never met before
10 minutes	Intro + Icebreakers	Introductions at tables • Name, hometown, what I hope to get out of this conversation Icebreaker • My favorite food is... • A hidden talent of mine is...
5 minutes	Go over ground rules, expectations, intentions	Intention for conversation Ground rules (referenced above; include): • Don't interrupt • Everyone shares • Use "I" statements
20 minutes	Small group discussions	Answer discussion questions as a group
20 minutes	Large group report back	One spokesperson per group reports back on main themes to the large group

[3] The note taker in this instance should be a separate person from the facilitator so that the facilitator can focus on guiding the conversation.

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5 minutes	Closing	Closing remarks and thank yous Talk about next steps for feedback gathered

Example facilitation guide for 90 minute **shopper focus group**

Time	Purpose	Agenda
5 minutes	Get food/snack if provided and settle in	A last chance before the discussion begins to • Use the bathroom • Get a drink etc • Review engagement agreement (if using)
15 minutes	Intro + Icebreakers	Intention for conversation Ground rules (referenced above; include): • Don't interrupt • Everyone shares • Use "I" statements Introductions • Name • How long you've been coming to the food shelf Icebreaker examples • My favorite food is... • A hidden talent of mine is... • My favorite market memory is...
60-65 minutes	Group discussion	Go through each prepared question
5 minutes	Closing	Closing remarks and thank yous Final questions/thoughts from shoppers Talk about next steps for feedback gathered

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Example facilitation guide for 25 minute **shopper/leadership 1:1's**

Time	Purpose	Agenda
5 minutes	Intro + Icebreaker	Introduce yourself and the purpose of holding 1:1's Ground rules Icebreaker examples ● My favorite food is... ● A hidden talent of mine is... ● My favorite market memory is...
15 minutes	Discussion time	Start by opening up the floor to the shopper Reference prepared questions list
5 minutes	Recap + Final questions	Provide a brief summary of what was discussed today and thank the shopper for their time.

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Shopper Voice Tools

Each of the following tools was created to support food shelves' leaders as you work to build trust with your shoppers and challenge the status quo of organizational decision making. Giving your shoppers a say in their experience with your food shelf can help ensure that you are serving your community in the best possible way.

These tools encourage relationship and trust building and community engagement as foundational elements of lasting change within your organization and the Minnesota Hunger Relief Sector. Because capturing shopper voice means highlighting the voices of *all shoppers*, not just those who speak English, it's recommended to have translators on hand when using these tools.

Trust building takes time and consistency, especially when your organization serves diverse populations. It can seem easy to host a focus group or community meal once or twice a year for a select group of shoppers, but hosting community engagement opportunities for all shoppers on a regular basis, *and* establishing a system to intentionally respond to their feedback takes perseverance and intentionality. Your first few attempts may have minimal success, with only one or two shoppers showing interest. This should not be seen as a failure on anyone's part, but rather part of the process of implementing something new. When you're willing to continue offering your shoppers the chance to participate in the decision making process even if they don't always seize those opportunities, you are showing them your commitment to uplifting their voices.

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Tool 1: Educational and reflective materials for internal food shelf stakeholders

Summary and intention:
Encouraging your internal food shelf stakeholders – including board members, volunteers, donors, and staff – to buy into any initiative to capture shopper voice can seem daunting, especially if they don't see anything wrong with the way decisions are currently being made. A great first step to getting buy-in is to guide them towards reconnecting their 'why?': why did they get involved with their food shelf?

This tool was designed to challenge board members and other internal stakeholders who may have never experienced hunger or food insecurity to think outside of themselves, and to reflect not only on their "why" but also the experiences of those living with food insecurity. By increasing their understanding of the root causes of hunger across America, and the work being done in the Hunger Relief Sector, these stakeholders can gain a better understanding of how their decisions and attitudes can directly influence your shoppers.

Effort v Impact:
Variable – you'll get out what you put in in terms of engagement, reflection, and working to reshape what shopper voice means in hunger relief and at your organization.

Number of participants and/or participant groups:
Food shelf leaders, designated volunteer(s), board members

Time commitment
30-60 minutes per week

Instructions/guidelines: This tool is meant to be used on an ongoing basis throughout the course of the pilot.

To use this tool:

1. Begin by finding a quiet, private space where you can engage with the material uninterrupted and without distractions
    a. This tool could also be used in a group discussion setting
2. Select 2-3 resources and questions to focus on from those provided below
3. Consider having pen and paper handy to jot down notes or reflections

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4. Complete follow-up questions

Below are 3 resources to get folks started on their reflective journey, regardless of their previous knowledge.

- 8 Myths About Hunger in America
- What Does Hunger in the US Look Like? | PBS
- Play Spent

You can find the full list of educational resources here. Resources include videos, quick resources, full length studies, and interactive resources.

Reflective Questions:

- Why did you join your organization (as a volunteer, board member, or staff) board? Why do you think your organization's mission is important?
- What about your organization's work excites you the most?
- What barriers are currently preventing shoppers from participating on the board or providing feedback on your organization's operations?
    - What are these barriers rooted in, and in what ways could they be overcome?
    - If you were to invite shoppers to join the board or provide input on decisions made at the food shelf, what steps do you need to take in order for them to feel welcome and safe speaking up?
- If there are currently shoppers on your board, what are two unique insights they've shared about the shopper experience?
    - How did the rest of your board react to their input? (Ex: What follow-up questions were asked?)
- What barriers are currently preventing shoppers from volunteering?
    - What are these barriers rooted in, and in what ways could they be overcome?
- How does prioritizing shopper voice in decision making align with your organization's goals?
- Do you have personal experience with food insecurity or hunger? How might your answer to this question influence the way you think about your organization's mission, and the lived experiences of your shoppers?

Follow up worksheet 1 and worksheet 2

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Tool 2: Community meals

Summary and intention:
Breaking bread with people is a great way to build connections over a shared human experience. Just think of all the meaningful moments in your life that took place sitting around a table, sharing a meal with friends and family. The goal of these meals would be to bring community members (shoppers, volunteers, community and organizational leadership) together in an informal setting to share their lived experiences and personal perspectives as it relates to food shelf culture and food insecurity struggles. Ideally, the food for these meals would be provided via catering from a local business, but food shelf staff may also decide to provide the food depending on the size of the gathering.

Effort v Impact:
This is a high effort/high impact tool. It requires several weeks of planning as well as several hours for operations on the day of the event. While the effort for this tool is high, the impact that it may have on bringing community members together and creating space for respectful dialogue is also significant for long term trust and community engagement.

Materials

- Prompts for discussion
- Topic suggestions
- Paper and writing utensils
- Event playlist – think about having folks submit songs when they RSVP
- Name tags
- Utensils
- Table numbers or centerpieces
- Pens, paper

Number of participants, and participant groups
Shoppers, food shelf leadership, volunteers, board members, community facilitators
Small org 6-10 people[4]
Med org 12-20 people
Large org 25+ people

[4] Small organizations refer to those who serve less than 100 households a month. Medium organizations refer to those who serve 100-300 households a month. Large organizations refer to those that serve 300 or more households in a month.

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Time commitment
1 month planning time
90-120 minutes for the event

Decision making points:

1. Determine your goal for this event. What kind of feedback are you hoping to gain from this event?
2. Select staff, volunteers, shoppers, etc to help with the planning and execution of the event.
3. Select a date and time for the event.
   When selecting a date and time consider:
   - Can you offer child care?
   - How will folks RSVP?
4. Secure a venue.
   When selecting a venue, consider:
   - Is the venue easy to locate and access?
   - Is it at a location where all of your shoppers will feel comfortable and safe? (ie. Are you meeting in a church, or community center?)
   - How many people would this location comfortably seat?
   - Is there a local business who would sponsor the event by providing a meeting space and/or funds for catering?
   - Can you offer transportation to and from the venue to shoppers?
5. Begin marketing event to shoppers at least 2-3 weeks prior to the event.
   Marketing can be done via social media posts, posters and announcements on location, and/or spreading the word via local community leaders and organizations.
6. Select catering for the event – depending on the number of people being served, catering orders should be placed 10-14 days prior to the event.
   When picking a place for catering, consider:
   - Is your choice sensitive to the different cultural and dietary needs of attendants?
   - Are you supporting a local business, or a chain?
   - Is the food healthy?
   - How will the food be transported to the venue?

Follow up worksheet

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Tool 3: Shopper focus groups

Summary and intention:
These focus groups are intended to be community run with a specific focus/topic in mind. The goal of these groups is to build community, confidence, and consensus among shoppers without the pressure or fear of discussing said topics in front of leadership. Focus groups could be used to brainstorm specific solutions to shopper challenges which could then be brought to leadership for discussion. In order to ensure that all voices are given equal opportunity and weight, an attempt should be made to recruit diverse shoppers to participate, and not just the shoppers who are already vocal with their questions or concerns. When possible, providing child care, translators, and/or compensation will encourage participation and show shoppers that their time and input is valued by food shelf leadership.

Effort v Impact:
This is a medium effort tool. It requires 2-3 weeks of planning as well as active recruitment of shoppers and moderators. It calls for intentionality when selecting participants, conducting the focus group, avoiding power dynamics when possible, and interpreting the feedback received. Additionally, this tool requires effort to create a safe space to encourage honesty, vulnerability, and potentially uncomfortable conversations. If interpreted and responded to effectively, feedback from shopper focus groups can have a medium to high impact on the shopper experience at a given food shelf.

Number of participants and participant groups
4-10 shoppers
1 community facilitator

Time commitment
60-90 minutes per focus group

Decision making points:
1. Determine your goal for this event. What kind of feedback are you hoping to gain from this event?
2. Select staff, volunteers, shoppers, etc to help with the planning and execution of the event.
    When recruiting help, consider:

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- Who is a good choice for facilitating these discussions? Ideally someone who is not in a leadership position at the food shelf.
- Do you need a community translator?

3. Select a date and time for the event.
   When selecting a date and time consider:
   - Can you offer child care during the event?
   - How will folks RSVP?
4. Secure a venue.
   When selecting a venue, consider:
   - Is the venue easy to locate and access?
   - Is it at a location where all of your shoppers will feel comfortable and safe? (ie. Are you meeting in a church, or community center?)
   - How many people would this location comfortably seat?
   - Is there a local business who would sponsor the event by providing a meeting space and/or funds for catering?
   - Can you offer transportation to and from the venue to shoppers?
5. Begin recruiting shoppers to participate 2 weeks before the event.
   Marketing can be done via social media posts, posters and announcements on location, and/or spreading the word via local community leaders and organizations, and inviting shoppers to participate directly.
   When recruiting shoppers, consider:
   - Is the group representative of your organization's demographics?
   - Do you need translators available?
   - Is compensation available for participants?

Follow up worksheet

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Tool 4: Leadership/Shopper 1:1's

Summary and intention:
This tool entails food shelf leaders and/or designated volunteers to set aside dedicated regular time slots to meet with shoppers in a 1-on-1 private setting. The goal of these 1:1's is to build relationships, discuss any questions or concerns about food shelf operations, and to hear shopper feedback about their food shelf experience. Ideally some of these conversations would happen with a translator available so that you can hear from all of the different demographics within your community and not just those that speak English. This point is particularly important because capturing shopper voice means highlighting the voices of *all shoppers* who choose to participate, and not just those who speak English.

Effort v Impact:
This is a medium effort/medium impact tool that may require several attempts before shoppers feel comfortable regularly engaging with their food shelf's leadership. Leadership/Shopper 1-on-1's will require humility, patience, and a willingness to be transparent and respectful from both parties. The check-ins will require being mindful to set clear and reasonable expectations and ground rules for engagement. This tool also requires a regular time commitment on the part of leadership and/or volunteers on an ongoing basis. The impact of this tool will vary depending on location, and the number (and demographics) of participating shoppers, as well as the regularity of offered sessions.

Number of participants and/or participant groups:
4-6 meetings per month between individual shoppers and food shelf leadership and/or designated volunteer(s).

Time commitment:
15-30 minutes per appointment slot, 90-180 minutes per month.

Decision making points:

1. Determine your goal for each check in.. What kind of feedback are you hoping to gain from this event? In what ways do you want these sessions to help build your relationships with your shoppers?
2. Select staff or volunteers who can also conduct 1-on-1s.
3. Select a date and time for the event.
   When selecting a date and time consider:

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- Is there a time slot(s) that you can leave open and dedicated to holding 1:1s on a regular basis?
- How will folks sign up for a time?

4. Secure a venue.

   When selecting a venue, consider:
   - Is the venue easy to locate and access?
   - Is it at a location where all of your shoppers will feel comfortable and safe? (ie. Are you meeting in a church, your food shelf, or community center?)
5. Begin recruiting shoppers to participate 2 weeks before you want to hold your first check-in. From there you can use a scheduling software like Calendly.com to continue recruiting shoppers on a rolling basis.

   Marketing can be done via social media posts, posters and announcements on location, spreading the word via local community leaders and organizations, and inviting shoppers to participate directly

   When recruiting shoppers, consider:
   - Are participants representative of your org's demographics?
   - Do you need translators available?
   - Is compensation available for participants?

Reflective Questions:

- How do you want to follow-up with participants before their meeting time to ensure they are still available?
- Did participants come to the 1:1 with prepared questions/topics?
- What was the age range of participants? Does this feel inline with your shopper population?
- What were the demographics of participants? Does this feel inline with your shopper population?
- What cultural differences did you notice across different conversations?
- Were there any responses or questions from participants that surprised you?
- Did participants express an interest in additional 1:1's in the future?
- How comfortable did you feel practicing transparency in your responses to questions?
- How effective do you feel you were at practicing transparency?
- Are you happy with the current list of questions? Are there any questions you think are missing or that should be removed based on participant responses?

Post pilot reflective worksheet

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Tool 5: Moderated town hall

Summary and intention:
Following the same basic concept as standard Town Hall or City Council meetings, the intent behind this tool is to host an event where shoppers are given the chance to pose questions, raise concerns, or share impact stories to the current decision makers (food shelf leaders, volunteers, board members, etc) about their experiences at the food shelf in a public forum. These meetings create an opportunity where shoppers can feel that their voices are heard, their concerns are not just their own, and that they have a space where they can address their community even if they themselves do not speak. These meetings also provide a chance for food shelf leaders to address multiple shoppers at once about a single issue, and to practice transparency when discussing the barriers or realities of implementing certain changes.

An important component of these town hall meetings will be a neutral third party moderator – either a community leader, someone from a local public health org, someone from FFEN, etc – who can ensure the conversation stays on track and remains productive and respectful.

Whenever possible, these meetings would have one or more interpreters present, and available childcare on site to encourage as much shopper participation as possible. Holding a poll at the food shelf prior to the first town hall could be a valuable way to select a time for these meetings when a majority of shoppers would be available.

For participating board members, volunteers, and leadership, there should be an emphasis on active listening and restraint, rather than reaction and defensiveness. This kind of listening encourages shoppers to participate without fear of retaliation. Those leading these sessions should check in with themselves occasionally if they start feeling uncomfortable or upset during the meeting. It's normal to feel upset or angry when you feel attacked, and to want to defend yourself. However, as a representative of your organization you will want to practice restraint, not taking comments personally, keeping an open mind, and respectfully acknowledging each piece of feedback – even when the feedback may not seem relevant or helpful, or may be phrased as a personal attack. By showing your shoppers and community members that you are serious about hearing their feedback in a respectful manner, they will begin to take the opportunity more seriously too, allowing your relationships and trust with them to build.

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Effort v Impact:
This is a high effort tool that requires multiple weeks of planning, multiple logistical considerations, and several hours of work on the day of the event. There are many moving pieces with this tool, and it requires level-headedness and empathy from food shelf stakeholders who will be hearing directly from shoppers. This tool has the potential of creating a significant impact in how shopper voice is captured in food shelf decision making.

Materials:
- Agenda/facilitation guide
- Engagement guidelines and expectation setting

Number of participants and/or participant groups:
Shoppers and food shelf leadership, volunteers, food bank representatives, board members, donors
Small org: 4-6 shoppers, 2 stakeholders
Medium org: 10-12 shoppers, 5-6 stakeholders
Large org: 20-25 shoppers, 10-12 stakeholders

Time commitment:
4-6 weeks for planning and marketing
60-90 minutes for the town hall itself

Decision making points:
1. Determine your goal for this event. What kind of feedback are you hoping to gain from this event?
2. Select staff, volunteers, shoppers, etc to help with the planning and execution of the event.
3. Select a date and time for the event.
   When selecting a date and time consider:
   - Can you offer child care?
   - How will folks RSVP?
4. Select one or more community leaders to act as facilitators.
5. Secure a venue.
   When selecting a venue, consider:
   - Is the venue easy to locate and access?
   - Is it at a location where all of your shoppers will feel comfortable and safe? (ie. Are you meeting in a church, or community center?)
   - How many people would this location comfortably seat?

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- Is there a local business who would sponsor the event by providing a meeting space and/or funds for catering?
- Can you offer transportation to and from the venue to shoppers?

6. Secure community translators to ensure all shoppers can participate.
7. Decide on refreshments.
   Will snacks be provided? If so, what kind(s), how much, and where will it be sourced from?
8. Begin marketing event to shoppers at least 2-3 weeks prior to event.
   Marketing can be done via social media posts, posters and announcements on location, and/or spreading the word via local community leaders and organizations.

Follow up worksheet

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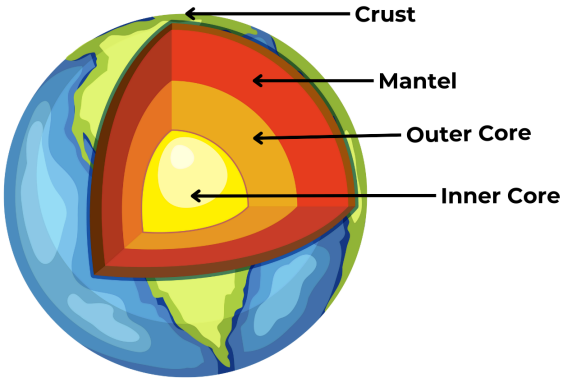
Appendix

Digging Deeper Reflection Questions

We encourage food shelf leaders to sit with these questions and write down your reflections using our worksheet before you start using tools to gather shopper feedback. Want to take your engagement with these questions to the next level? Try interacting with Harvard's Implicit Association Test before completing the reflective worksheet.



Crust - Just like the crust of the Earth, these questions are meant to be surface level, and able to be answered without much reflection.

Mantel - Another layer down, and the pressure is increased. These questions require a deeper level of reflection, and a willingness to sit with discomfort.

Core - Core questions aim to get at the root of how we think and interact with others, and to challenge judgements or assumptions about others you may not even know you have.

Crust Questions

- What is your "why?" for including shopper voice in org decision making?
- What policies might prevent all shoppers from getting equitable service?
- What feedback do you anticipate hearing from shoppers?
    - How might acting on that feedback change the shopper experience?

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- What are you currently doing well in terms of prioritizing shopper feedback?
    - How do you currently incorporate shopper voice and feedback?
- What could you do differently when receiving shopper feedback?
- How do you currently incorporate shopper voice and feedback in your organization?
    - In what ways are these current practices effective?
    - In what ways could they be improved?
- How are decisions currently being made at your organization? Also consider:
    - Who makes these decisions?
    - When are organizational decisions usually made (ex. During board meetings, by yourself as a food shelf leader, etc)?
        - If most important decisions are made in a rush by one person, there is limited time for reflection. By setting aside time to talk out decisions with shoppers, board members, or other food shelf stakeholders, decisions can be reflected on with more care and foresight.

Mantel Questions

- What barriers or resistance might you face from volunteers, board members, donors, food banks, etc. when looking to make changes?
    - Why are making these changes work regardless important to you?
    - How can you encourage empathy?
- How can you identify discrepancies between the way things are, and the way you want them to be?
- What are some changes that you'd like to see at your food shelf?
    - What are some things that shoppers have expressed they wished were different at your food shelf?
- What might shoppers NOT like about your food shelf?
- How are you currently working to find common ground with your shoppers?
- Why is this change to your organization's decision making process important to the organization's impact?
- How does prioritizing shopper voice in decision making align with your organization's goals?
    - What are three ways you can explain this alignment to your staff and volunteers to encourage buy-in?
- What changes to organizational decision making would define success in prioritizing shopper voice for your organization?
- What don't ***you*** (as the food shelf manager) like about your food shelf?

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    - How might your shopper's experience these things by putting yourself into their shoes?

Core Questions

- What judgements/assumptions might your shopper or volunteers have about you?
- What judgements/assumptions might you have about people who shop at food shelves?
- How might these judgements/assumptions get in the way of building trusting and respectful relationships?
- What **implicit biases** may be blocking you from engaging with shopper feedback?
    - Do I interact with people who have different lived experiences from me?
    - What privileges do I have that others may not have?
- What judgments/assumptions may be present among your staff and volunteers that prevent them from engaging with shopper feedback?
    - What organizational biases?
- Generative and empathetic conversation is rooted in trust, respect, and listening to understand rather than to respond. In conversations with your shoppers, how are you currently practicing active listening when receiving feedback?
- What helps you personally to feel safe and heard in a conversation?
    - In what ways are you creating a welcoming, safe environment for your shoppers to share feedback?
- How can you challenge the status quo of decision making at your organization?
- How confident and committed are you to making organizational changes to capture community voice on a scale from 1 to 10?
- What would your organization look like if you met your stated goals for making these changes?
- What are 2 ways you will capture community voice in organizational decision making moving forward?

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Glossary

- Active listening - The act of listening attentively to a speaker, observing their body language, and *listening with the intent to understand the other person fully, rather than listening to respond*.
    - Active listening skills include commitment, attentiveness to non-verbal cues (tone of voice, facial expressions, etc) and body language, listening without judgment or interrupting, asking open ended or follow up questions, and paraphrasing to ensure comprehension.
- Basic Needs Insecurity - The lack, or fear of lacking basic resources such as food, housing, childcare, transportation, physical safety, mental health services, and more.
- Compassion Fatigue - The emotional and mental cost of caring for others and their emotions, often rooted in our desire to help and comfort others.
- Dialogue - Dialogue is collaborative, open ended, and concerned with finding common ground, or agreeing to agree.
- Debate - Debate is about agreeing to disagree.
- Empathy - Empathy, in the simplest terms, is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. Another way to think about empathy is practicing perspective taking or “walking in another person’s shoes”.
- Equality - The state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities. Or, that state of everyone receiving the same goods or services.
- Equity - Everyone receiving what they *need*, rather than receiving the same things as everyone else.
- Food justice - Food Justice is communities exercising their right to grow, sell, and eat healthy food. Healthy food is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally-appropriate, and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers, and animals. People practicing food justice leads to a strong local food system, self-reliant communities, and a healthy environment. (Congressional Hunger Center)

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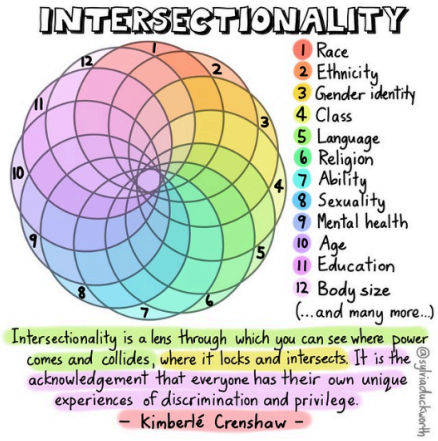
- Grandstanding - behaving in a way that makes people pay attention to you instead of thinking about more important matters. This may also take the form of someone preventing others from speaking by monopolizing attention.
- Icebreakers - A question or activity meant to welcome and reduce tension between activity participants.
- Implicit bias - "...We have a bias when, rather than being neutral, we have a preference for (or aversion to) a person or group of people.... Without our conscious knowledge. A fairly commonplace example of this is seen in studies that show that white people will frequently associate criminality with black people without even realizing they're doing it." (Perception Institute)
    - Additional resources on implicit bias
        - PBS: Implicit Bias: Peanut Butter, Jelly, and Racism
        - Implicit Bias: Concepts Unwrapped McCombs School of Business
        - Prejudice and Discrimination: Crash Course Psychology
    - Try Harvard's Implicit Association Test
- Intersectionality - "Intersectionality is the lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects. It is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege." (Kimberle Crenshaw)



- Jargon - Special words or expressions (such as acronyms) that are used by a particular profession or group and are difficult for another to understand.

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- Perspective taking - The act of putting yourself in another person's shoes to understand how a situation appears and feels to that person.
- Poverty - Poverty is the state of being extremely poor, or not having enough money to meet basic needs including food, clothing, and shelter.
- Social Determinants of Health - "Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life." (Center for Disease Control and Prevention)

- Transparency - providing context for the decision we are making, and any barriers we may be encountering. **It's not about sharing everything but about acknowledging limitations that exist, frustrations we may also encounter, and speaking to others with honesty and respect.**

Further Resources

Educational and reflective resources for food shelf stakeholders

Facilitation

- How to Facilitate Dialogue in a Group Workshop
- Tips & Techniques for Facilitating Groups
- The Power of Generative Listening
- How to Facilitate Discussions
- 18 Ground Rules for Group Discussion

Organizational buy-in

- How to Navigate Change Using Transparency, Charisma, and Empathy
- Generative listening to promote a shared sense of purpose and buy-in among stakeholders

Worksheets

Didn't find what you were looking for? Reach out to programs@ffen.org to request additional glossary terms or resources.