Foundation For Essential Needs

Foundation for Essential Needs (FFEN) is a non-profit providing operations support and resources to food shelves.
For more information, visit www.ffen.org.

Simple, Everyday Ways to Capture Shopper Feedback

Food shelves can access important data through the Minnesota Food Shelf Survey, which helps identify trends, gaps, and opportunities, but can also raise *new* questions. You might see a data point that surprises you, confirms a hunch, or highlights an area where you want to dig deeper.

These low-effort, high-frequency ways to listen are especially helpful when time and capacity are limited, or trust-building is still in progress.

Simple, informal ways to gather shopper feedback help organizations:

- **Go beyond the numbers** by learning from real people's experiences
- **Make it easy for shoppers to share** their thoughts
- **Build trust** by listening regularly and putting people first
- **Try ideas on a small scale** before making big changes

These methods are not intended to replace more structured feedback-gathering methods, such as surveys, one-on-one interviews, focus groups, town halls, or community meals, as outlined in the Shopper's Voice Handbook.

Easy Tools Food Shelves Can Use Right Away

Marble or Token Jars
Place jars labeled with clear options (e.g., "Morning hours," "Evening hours"). Shoppers drop a marble, bean, or token into the jar that best reflects their preference.

Best for:
- Quick feedback on hours, food items, layout changes, etc.
- Shoppers with limited time or language barriers

Tips:
- Keep questions simple (2–4 options max)
- Share results visibly: "You told us—here's what we learned."

Question of the Week
Choose one intentional question and ask it consistently—at check-in, while shopping, or at exit.

Examples:
- "Was there anything you hoped to find today but couldn't?"
- "What would make your visit easier next time?"

Best for:
- Relationship building
- Informal, conversational insights

Tips:
- Have a simple way to record responses (tally sheet or notes)

Resources are developed and reviewed regularly with input and insights from food shelf leaders and sector partners. Additional feedback on tools can be shared with programs@ffen.org. (Last updated: 2/13/2026)

Large Post-It Note Stations
Post large sheets around the space with prompts like: “One thing that works well here,” “One thing that could be better.” Shoppers add comments as they wait, or after shopping.

Best for:

- Open-ended insights
- Capturing multiple voices at once

Tips:

- Offer multilingual support as needed for your population
- Have staff or volunteers jot down verbal responses if writing is a barrier

Dot Voting
Present a short list of options or ideas and give each shopper 1–3 stickers or dots to place next to what matters most to them.

Best for:

- Prioritizing ideas
- Identifying shared concerns or preferences

Tips:

- (Optional) Combine with a follow-up question: “Why did you choose this?”

Comment Cards (Ultra-Simple)
Small cards with 1–2 questions and a drop box near the exit.

Best for:

- Private feedback
- Sensitive topics

Tips:

- Rotate questions monthly
- Clearly explain how feedback will be used

Visual Scales
Use a scale (1–5 or faces from 😞 to 🙂) posted on a board. Shoppers point, circle, or mark where they land.

Best for:

- Measuring experience (welcome, dignity, ease of shopping)

Tips:

- Pair with an optional “Why?” follow-up:

A short, voluntary prompt adds context to the score without adding burden.

Make These Tools Meaningful

Even small actions signal to shoppers that their voices matter—to build trust:

- **Be transparent** about why you’re asking
- **Start small and be consistent**
- **Share back what you heard** (even if change isn’t immediate)
- **Acknowledge limits** honestly when feedback can’t be acted on right away

Share Your Results

- Display a poster that highlights what you heard
- Include key insights in your monthly volunteer email
- Present findings during board meetings

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