Food Security Task Force

May 24, 2021

SWOT Analysis Recap & Next Steps

Strengths

- **Food Providers**
  - Robust non-profit support network
  - Most counties our size don't have their own food bank (AFAC)
  - Schools & PTAs that were able to activate and get a lot done during the pandemic
  - Lots of volunteers
  - School meals are free for all students for 2021-22 school year
- **Financial resources**
  - Affluent county with (county) resources to tap into
  - Generous citizen donors – financial and in-kind
- **Partnerships**
  - Many successful partnerships & willingness to partner among public/private sectors, especially through faith and BIDs
  - Referral network between services serving clients

Strengths

- **Communications**
  - Positive relationships with apartment management – helps with communicating to residents
  - New map and updated food resources website has good information
- **Adaptive**
  - Newness of Stephanie's position
  - Virtual services (applications, renewals, interviews) because of the pandemic
  - Food providers are responsive to client feedback
- **Healthy & Culturally Appropriate**
  - A network of gardens growing for donation
  - Foods provided at food banks tend to be healthier and more culturally appropriate than average with many providing fresh produce
  - Several providers collect feedback on types of food offered and have adjusted based on feedback
- **Geography**
  - Reliable public transportation
  - Multiple (convenient) pick-up locations
  - Delivery as an option for some populations
- **Passion/Commitment**
  - Lots of interest from the general public in supporting food security
  - Passionate and knowledgeable community and community leaders
  - Staff and volunteers treat clients with dignity and respect

Weaknesses

- **Access**
  - Food is not necessarily available when it's convenient for people who need it
  - The time and effort it takes to commute by public transit, especially while transporting heavy bags of food (and children), especially having to wait in long lines and possibly go to multiple locations.
  - Personal mobility issues
  - Having to wait in lines in inclement weather
- **Fear/Reluctance/Stigma**
  - Reluctance to become part of a government sponsored program & public charge
  - Stigma around needing help
  - Fear of getting COVID
  - Communication about requirements needs to be clear and communicated regularly
- **Communication barriers**
  - Language barriers (and literacy levels in any language)
  - Information sent via email or on websites, when web access isn't always available
    - Balance of sending out information, but not so much that people don't open emails/look at website/texts
  - School system is the only access point for many families
  - Misinformation spread and ripple effect of a negative experience
  - Hard to get honest feedback

Weaknesses

- **Food provided**
  - Disconnect between what is donated or affordably available and desired culturally appropriate food
  - Picky kid eaters, regardless of culture, can make food less accessible to a family. Not worth getting food that half of your family won't eat.
  - Small portions of distributed food, which increases need for more frequent visits
  - Cultural appropriateness of food provided
- **Understanding of the populations in need**
  - Underestimating barriers to accessing food
  - Communities in need are often not that visible and not that well understood
- **Data**
  - Not measuring success
  - Data around the scope of the problem; lack of shared data collection system – unduplicated households served, number using multiple resources
  - Amount of information required on an AFAC referral
- **High Cost of Living**
  - High cost of living & low minimum wage is a cause of food insecurity
  - Overall wealth of Arlington hides the need for services such as food and makes Arlington less competitive for outside funding

Weaknesses

- **Other**
    - High level of volunteer engagement, can hinder permanent progress / systemic change because of a reliance on effective volunteer efforts.

    - Inconsistent utilization numbers, even with pre-registration, result in leftovers (then need storage or backup recipient). Often a result of a household's shifting priorities/ability to get to pickup location.

    - Not a lot of nutrition programming & how to do it in a culturally appropriate way

    - Newness of Food Security Coordinator position (still building relationships, gaining experience)

    - Lesser known resources like the lunches at the mental health drop-in center and ASPAN bagged lunches tend to get overlooked, but these programs do a lot to aid in food security.

    - No real nimble/emergency/short term food provision (ex. Hospital discharge)

Opportunities

- Create strategic plan using data (ID metrics and goals)

- Engage more with non-APAH, AHC properties

- Focus on older adults and households not in the school system.

- Change focus from just hunger to nutrition insecurity to support health outcomes
  - Expansion of local produce programs (e.g produce boxes)

- Improve services provided by non-profits & government
  - Educate partners on the services of other partnering organizations to support collaboration
  - Translate all communications into all languages spoken/read in Arlington (paper and online)
  - Sensitivity, empathy training for human services workers
  - Look to APS and connection to families for opportunities to improve equity. APS has worked hard over the last 15 months to build community with families.
  - Use more specialized communication tools – i.e. WhatsApp groups

Discuss Opportunities & Threats in Groups

- 20 minutes in small groups to discuss additional opportunities & threats
- We'll reconvene as a large group and discuss & bring up anything else that might be missing

Next Steps - Big Picture

- Needs Assessment (6-8 months)
  - Research study
  - Task Force info gathering
- Brainstorm strategies to meet identified needs
  - Assess feasibility and likelihood of success in 3 years
  - Think through what would be needed to make those strategies a success
  - Are there partnerships that need to be developed?
  - Are there things that we already know we want included? Ex: centralized data measures

1 Ensure Food Access

ACTION 1.1
EXPAND SCHOOL PANTRIES IN WAKE COUNTY SCHOOLS

ACTION DESCRIPTION
Open additional school-based food pantries in Wake County schools. These food pantries serve students and their families, and can be organized and managed in various ways.

LEAD ORGANIZATION
Wake County

EXISTING AND POTENTIAL PARTNERS
FBCENC, IFFS, school principals, school social workers, student-led food organizations, Wake County Food Security Working Group

MEASURABLE INDICATOR
» Number of middle and high schools with school pantries

ANTICIPATED COSTS
» Start Up Cost for a New School Pantry: Approximately $3,000
» Annual Cost for a School Pantry: Approximately $2,250

TIMEFRAME
» 2017: Open five new pantries
» Review policy objectives and adjust targets annually

RATIONALE
School pantries are flexible, cost-effective, and responsive to changing student and family needs. Willing and capable community partners exist to implement expansion, and as of Spring 2017 at least six schools are operating pantries. School pantries provide effective student and family outreach opportunities for school social workers.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS
» School pantries are part of a larger policy to establish dedicated food resources in schools, and should be considered in the context of other food resources such as universal breakfast and backpack buddies.
» Key school personnel to engage when seeking new sites include the Principal, Assistant Principal, and school social worker or counselor
» Wake County school pantry policy does not currently call for open public access (only students and their families). This prohibition, however, is based on complex factors and may deserve future reconsideration.
» Student organizations and clubs should be encouraged to help manage school food pantries.

This is an example from a Food Security Action Plan from Wake County, NC.

I'd like us to follow this model for our proposal.

For each strategy that we propose, I want us to be able to identify
- why it's important
- who will participate
- how we'll measure success & progress
- costs
- timeline for action

What's next – Short Term

- 6/7 meeting - Needs Assessment planning
  - What do we need to know that will help us prioritize actions to take?
- Starting 6/21 - Meeting monthly as a whole group
  - June 21, July 19, August 16, September 13, October 25, November 22
- Split into 4 sub-committees that also meet monthly
  - Research study oversight & collaboration
  - Task Force driven needs assessments
  - Centralized Metrics & Data
  - Communications & Collaboration
- Each will have a chair or co-chairs
  - Chairs will work with Stephanie to set agendas, workplans