2018 Agency Survey Results

FINAL REPORT

FOOD LIFELINE
HUNGER DOESN'T HAVE TO HAPPEN
2018 Agency Survey Results: Executive Summary

From April to May 2018, Food Lifeline conducted a survey of the agencies in its partner network. We received the most feedback ever, with a response rate of 82%! After reviewing your responses, we identified these impacts to your work:

- **Communications**: agencies find in-person meetings and site visits to be most helpful. They also access our website for information, and like having Food Lifeline staff present at local and regional coalition meetings.
- **Online Ordering/Agency Express**: we should improve the item descriptions and offer product in smaller case sizes.
- **Food Variety**: agencies want more dairy, meat, and produce. Other desired items are ready to eat meals, pantry staples, culturally-appropriate foods, and personal care/hygiene goods.
- **Grocery Rescue**: we should focus on improving our store training and work to maintain high-quality donations from our retail partners.
- **Product Feedback**: some agencies receive too much non-nutritious donations, like bakery products, sugary foods, snacks, and sodas.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Training**: most people either offer training to their staff/volunteers or would be interested in offering it.
- **Expanding Services**: some agencies know expansion in their area is needed, but they lack the resources to meet the need. Other agencies know it exists, but they don't know exactly where.

Since the survey period ended, we have made improvements to these areas:

- **Communications**: we are increasing our presence in the field by adding non-monitoring visits and staff volunteer opportunities at partner agencies across Western Washington.
- **Online Ordering/Agency Express**: we are improving our item descriptions, item codes, and are repacking more food into cases instead of totes.
- **Food Variety**: we will continue to source highly-desired product. We created the organizations Feeding Washington and Feeding the Northwest with our partners in Spokane, Idaho, and Oregon to help infuse extra product variety from farms and manufacturers outside the Western Washington region.
- **Grocery Rescue**: we are updating our store training, job aids, and agency manual to help improve donation quality.
- **Product Feedback**: we have prioritized nutritious food sourcing from our donors, but continue to accept some non-nutritious foods for distribution.
- **DEI Training**: Food Lifeline recognizes that addressing the root causes of hunger means combating the root causes of poverty, including racism and systemic inequities. We hired the Center for Equity and Inclusion to help lead our organization's transformation.
- **Expanding Services**: we are planning to pilot client data collection software (Link2Feed) and are working to keep costs as low as possible. We also plan to launch a Hunger in Washington study to better understand community needs. We will need high engagement from the network to inform our work and give feedback on our progress in these areas.

We can accomplish so much together in 2019. We look forward to working together to eliminate barriers, improve our service to you, and get closer to our collective goal of ending hunger in Western Washington. Please contact us if you have questions, agencyrelations@foodlifeline.org.

We look forward to seeing you all at the 2019 Partner Agency Conference on May 6! The full report is enclosed below.
I. Introduction and Methodology

Food Lifeline conducted its 2018 Agency Satisfaction Survey between April 1 and May 1, 2018. The Agency Relations team sent an email to our agency contacts with a link to the survey on SurveyMonkey. We sent a reminder email on April 19 and April 30. A week before the deadline, department staff called at least one contact at each agency to encourage them to complete the survey or thank them for their participation. Our original deadline of May 1, 2018 was also extended to May 8 to give participants more time to complete the survey.

Our survey contained 36 questions organized into 10 categories using a variety of question types. We used SurveyMonkey to conduct the survey, which respondents could complete using a computer or mobile device.

Questions 1-15 asked respondents about their satisfaction with Food Lifeline’s customer service and programs. We asked for feedback on our communication methods, online ordering, and the grocery rescue program. Questions 16-21 related to agency capacity. Questions 22-27 focused on the programs and services offered by our partners. Questions 28-31 asked respondents about their short-term plans for their organizations. The last group of questions, 32-36, focused on the demographics of our network.

We received 238 responses from 290 agencies in our network at that time. This is a response rate of 82%, nearly twice the response rate for our 2017 survey, and our highest-ever response rate to-date. Thank you!

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Throughout the report, we refer to the people who took the survey as “respondents.” As noted above, an 82% response rate means not everyone in our network took the survey. Not everyone taking the survey answered every question. It’s likely that not every person at every agency would even answer each question the same way.

This may seem like a minor grain of salt to include at the beginning of these results: it is not. Many of the responses below capture a specific moment in time or the concerns of a specific person or group. The agency survey is not a substitute for the regular conversations, calls, emails, and feedback you share with us. The survey provided us a general understanding of the network’s views, and we made decisions this year based on the responses we collected.

Our agency relations team is responsible for processing survey results. We shared the results with other Food Lifeline teams and departments. We wanted to share with you the results that we received and our efforts to improve based on your feedback.

Some of the suggestions you provided are easy fixes. We have already implemented some improvements. Other improvements may take months or years of planning,
and, of course, some ideas/suggestions you made may be too costly or complicated to implement.

Throughout this report, we include the progress of our efforts and our plans for the future. Some of your responses led to new questions, and we will invite you to join us as we find new ways to improve. We hope that you will continue to provide feedback to us.

II. Respondent Demographics

Of 238 responses, 210 respondents told us the type of emergency food services they provided. Agencies that are only food banks represented about 55% of the responses; agencies that are only meal programs represented about 15%. Agencies that provide both food bank and a meal program made up 20% of the responses received. About 10% of agencies offered some other food service, such as meal deliveries and backpack programs.

About 39% of respondents represent small agencies (0 – 9,999 individual visits or meals per year), 40% represent medium-sized agencies (10,000 – 49,999), and 21% represent large agencies (50,000+).

About 40% of the agencies reported they are based in King County. Pierce County agencies represent about 12% of the responses, while 10% of respondents are in Snohomish County. We also heard from Skagit (5%), Grays Harbor (4%), Lewis (4%), Cowlitz/Wahkiakum (4%), Clallam (3%), Kitsap (3%), Whatcom/San Juan (3%), Jefferson (3%), Thurston (3%), Mason (2%), Island (1%), and Pacific (1%) counties.

Rural agencies make up 36% of respondents, while 59% identified as urban/suburban. Slightly more than 5% of agencies weren’t sure which category they fit into.

We asked about the specific connection to Food Lifeline the respondent has in their agency. Nearly 62% of the 210 respondents said they were the primary point of contact for their organization. Almost 58% said they were responsible for online ordering, and 56% said they handled reporting duties. Roughly 42% said they were responsible for oversight of their program, and 44% have an executive director or leadership position at their agency.

WHAT WE’RE DOING

We are finding new ways to partner with agencies outside of King County. We use a calculation known as MPIN (meals per person in need) to estimate where additional resources are needed most. This year we will focus on expanding connections to Pacific, Island, and San Juan county agencies. We are also working to increase food distribution support to agency partners in all counties.
III. Food Lifeline Programs

CUSTOMER SERVICE

We measure agency satisfaction by combining your ratings of both our courtesy and the timeliness of our responses. With 238 responses, 67% rated our courtesy as excellent, while 29% rated our courtesy as good. Less than 4% rated our courtesy as average or poor.

About 51% of people answering this survey said our response timeliness was excellent. Slightly less than 40% said our timeliness was good, and a little more than 9% said our timeliness was average or poor.

We asked for specific feedback about our customer service, and we received 66 responses. About 80% of these responses were positive. Suggested areas of improvement included providing clearer lines of contact for Food Lifeline staff and programs and resolving issues around a particular program or offering.

WHAT WE’RE DOING

One of our strategic plan goals is to earn from our agency partners a rating of good or excellent in courtesy and response timeliness. Starting this year, we will no longer be combining good and excellent ratings into one category. Our FY2019 goal is to earn an excellent rating from at least 70% of the agencies in our network. By setting this new benchmark, we are challenging ourselves to deliver to you the highest level of customer service.

This year we also eliminated the Monthly Activity Report in favor of a Yearly Activity Report. Since eliminating the MAR in July, we have heard from several agencies that this move cut down their monthly reporting workload. In additional to reducing the amount of reporting work that agencies must do on a monthly basis, Food Lifeline gets more accurate data that only needs to be collected once a year.

COMMUNICATION

We asked about the usefulness of the different ways we communicate with the agency network. Most people (87%) found in-person meetings and site visits the most useful communication method. People also preferred accessing information on our website (85%) or having Food Lifeline staff present at local/regional coalition meetings (68%). Please see Figure 1 for the full breakdown.
We also received requests for communication or resources in areas including:

- Easier-to-follow recall notices
- Calendar of holiday closures and events
- More information about our strategic plan, current programs, and future initiatives
- Food Lifeline staff working at agency sites

**WHAT WE’RE DOING**

This year we’ve increased our staff presence in the field. Across the community partnerships and food resources departments, we now have 10 staff members who meet with our partner agencies and food donors in Western Washington at least one day per week. Attending coalition meetings continues to be a priority, and we’ve attended more than 90% of all coalition meetings this year.

In addition to the monthly agency e-newsletter, we are adding conference calls featuring information from experts across the state. Food Lifeline staff spent a day of service volunteering with 20 partner agencies in King, Snohomish, and Pierce County. The Community Partnerships department has also relaunched our external volunteer program. Department staff aim to volunteer with at least one partner agency each month.
ONLINE ORDERING AND AGENCY EXPRESS

A little more than 75% of people completing the survey say they participate in online ordering through Agency Express (AE).

More than three-quarters of respondents said that their experience using AE was either good or excellent. Fewer than 3% of respondents said they had a poor or very poor experience. Please see Figure 2.

Item descriptions on AE continue to be an issue, however. Just 46% of agencies said the item descriptions were either good or excellent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Using AE</th>
<th>Descriptions on AE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>52.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>16.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2: Satisfaction with Agency Express (questions 8 and 9)**

We also asked about respondents' satisfaction with the orders they received through Agency Express. Most people rated their satisfaction with order accuracy as good (47%) or excellent (40%). Most people said the quality of their orders was good (58%) or excellent (26%).

The variety of offerings on Agency Express had the lowest satisfaction scores of the three categories, with slightly more than 50% of respondents rating the variety as good (41%) or excellent (11%). About a third of respondents rated our variety as average. Please see Figure 3.
**Figure 3: Satisfaction with Online Ordering (questions 10, 11, and 12)**

Most of the comments on how to improve online ordering were divided into a few categories:

- Improve item descriptions
- Add photos of product
- Specify the size and quantity of a product
- Provide a date on package (DOP) for items
- Improve Agency Express

**WHAT WE’RE DOING**

Since receiving these results, the survey results team has met several times with our operations department to review existing practices and identify solutions. Our progress includes:

- Our online order guide lists the 35 item codes that assorted (mixed) product is grouped into by our volunteer repack teams. Each item code contains representative photos of the product, the weight of the case, and the storage type (dry, cooler, or freezer). You can find a list of these items on our website.
- We are repacking more tote-quantity food into smaller case sizes to give agencies with less storage space more ordering options.
- We are also expanding the number of items available for purchase through Order Up! that we don’t regularly receive through the donated stream.
Taking a picture of every item available as they come in would be resource-intensive. However, we are investigating whether we could add stock photos for products that we receive often.

We have communicated many of these changes to you through our newsletter and email blasts. The feedback you’ve provided through this survey, through emails and in person, are how we’ve learned what to prioritize. Agency Relations is exploring additional ways to collect your feedback and include agencies to work together on solutions.

**GROCERY RESCUE**

Nearly 72% of the agencies surveyed told us they participate in our grocery rescue (GR) program. We asked them how they would rate four aspects of the program. Most people (45%) rated as good the reporting on MealConnect, with others said it was excellent (29%) or average (23%). An equal number of people reported the GR team’s customer service as either good or excellent (42% each).

Respondents were also asked about how they would rate our training, both for agencies and for stores. Most respondents said our training for agencies was either good (41%) or excellent (34%). Our training for stores was rated good (45%) or average (29%), with 18% rating it as excellent. Please see Figure 4.

![Figure 4: Satisfaction with Grocery Rescue (question 15)](image-url)
WHAT WE’RE DOING

The grocery rescue team is currently reviewing how we deliver trainings, re-trainings, and visits to the stores and agencies we work with. One of our challenges remains the variability between stores and the level of turnover across the retail system. The GR team would like to compile effective practices that we and our agency partners have found useful when working with local donors. We look forward to learning from our Grocery Rescue agency partners about what has worked for you, what has improved quality, and what practices have had little impact on donation quality.

Over the next few months we will update our GR partner manual and share it to the network for feedback. We are also exploring the use of a MealConnect phone app that could make reporting on MealConnect much easier.

In 2019 the GR team will also begin monitoring agencies who only pick up food through our GR program. The Agency Relations team currently performs this function. This change will help establish a single point of contact at Food Lifeline for those agencies.

IV. Product Feedback

The next set of questions focus on the desirability of our offerings and identifying capacity challenges. Food Lifeline set a goal to double the number of meals we help distribute by 2026. We know this can’t happen without the agencies and redistribution organizations (RDOs) in our network. In addition to supporting the partners that pick up grocery donations from more than 400 stores across Western Washington, we need to increase capacity across every part of the emergency food system if we want to meet the needs of our communities.

PRODUCT DESIRABILITY

We asked about the types of product you would like to see more of. The 220 respondents were able to check as many categories as they needed. As we might have guessed, dairy (68%) and meat (68%) are the two most desired, with produce (60%) close behind. Please see Figure 5.

Ready-to-eat (RTE) items were also desired by the network. Shelf-stable RTE items (soups and rice-based meals) were desired by 53% of respondents, while perishable RTE items (salads, sandwiches, and frozen meals) were desired by 22%. Snacks were requested by 20% of respondents.

Still-popular items the respondents would like to see are pantry staples (44%), alternative-meat proteins (35%), and culturally-appropriate foods (30%).

We received 46 responses (21%) in the Other category. We received a lot of requests for dietary-restrictive foods, such as gluten-free items or foods that were low in
sodium or sugar. We also received requests for flavor enhancers, such as oils and spices, or for more plate-fillers like pasta, breads, corn meal, or corn masa.

**Figure 5: Desired Food Categories (question 16)**

Non-food categories are an increasing part of agency distributions. We asked which categories would be most useful. Personal care and hygiene products were chosen by 89% of the respondents, while cleaning supplies (54%) and emergency supplies (41%) were also requested. Please see Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Desired Non-Food Categories (question 17)**
Items in the Other category include toilet paper and other paper products, gloves, pet food, and diapers in more sizes.

WHAT WE’RE DOING

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) must have been reading many agencies’ minds when they released large quantities of fresh milk, chicken, pork, and produce this winter. TEFAP contractors, including Food Lifeline, started receiving this product in December and expect to receive and distribute extra TEFAP items throughout winter and spring 2019.

Procuring dairy and meat for the network has always been a high priority for our food resources team. We are working to increase the quantity of produce distributed to the network, which we address further in a later section.

This year we also expanded our Order Up! program, which makes available products we purchase in bulk to sell to agencies without a delivery fee. Even with a small markup for sourcing and logistics expenses, this product is usually (but not always) available at a lower cost than an agency could purchase on its own. The food resources team used survey feedback to create a list of items they could source for this program. These items include, but aren’t limited to:

- Diapers in multiple sizes
- Cooking oils
- Spices/seasonings (salt, pepper, ginger, garlic, hot sauce, soy sauce)
- Almond milk
- Other personal hygiene items
- Kitted kids’ meals

These items are being added to Agency Express as we source them. We will continue to update you about the product selection through the agency newsletter or an email blast.

UNWANTED PRODUCTS

We asked survey respondents which items they receive from us that they would like to receive less of, and we received 86 responses. If you remember this offering on Agency Express, we weren’t surprised to see freeze-dried limes on the list! Some of the items that some agencies said they didn’t want from us include:

- Bakery and bread products
- Sugary foods (sodas, desserts)
- Snacks (chips, popcorn)
- Drink mixers
- Dietary-restrictive foods (vegan)
- Large bulk items
- Decaffeinated coffee
WHAT WE’RE DOING

We know that one agency’s desired items are another agency’s unwanted items! We won’t use this information to refuse donations that would still be welcomed by some agencies. The list is also indicative of the types of product we had in our donation stream at the time the survey was released.

Last year we drafted a nutrition policy to help us promote good nutrition and contribute to community wellness. This means that our food resources department is actively requesting from donors items like: fresh, canned, and frozen fruits and vegetables; fresh dairy products; meat and non-meat protein; pantry staples like flour, beans, oats, rice, pasta, cooking oils, sugar, spices, and herbs. Our policy also states that we will accept and distribute but not actively source items like: chips and crackers, baking mixes, desserts and bakery products, and sugar sweetened beverages. As always, we will continue to reject products that contain appetite suppressants and alcohol. Due to a change in policy, we also no longer accept alcohol-related products (like drink mixes).

Every community’s needs are different, and many agencies are free to choose what they will and won’t distribute to their clients. We can do more to better understand how our policy impacts you and your clients at the local level, or help you craft similar policies at your agencies.

V. Agency Capacity

Based on feedback we received from partners and on prior surveys, we know that many of you would like to be able to distribute more perishable products, including produce. The next series of questions asked about the challenges of receiving and distributing more produce.

PRODUCE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

We received feedback from 214 respondents about their barriers to accepting more produce. Thirty-nine percent of respondents said that storage capacity at their sites was an issue. The types of produce available was selected by 29% of respondents, while the size or packaging type of the produce was chosen by 18%. Please see Figure 7.

About 20% of respondents said they had no limits to the amount of produce they could accept from us. Respondents who selected Other (17%) include these reasons:

- Cost of delivery
- Location of our warehouse
- Not enough distribution days
- Not partnered through online ordering
Figure 7: Limitations to Accepting More Produce (question 19)

One of the benefits of our connection to the Feeding America network is the ability to source both local and out-of-state produce. This infuses additional variety into the produce we can offer, though the inbound costs to bring this product to our warehouse are sometimes prohibitively expensive. We asked survey respondents how we should prioritize the produce we can bring into the region.

Respondents said they want us to bring in more citrus (86%), such as oranges, grapefruits, and other citrus fruits. Apples were the second-highest item requested by 78% of respondents. Melons (75%), stone fruits (71%), and potatoes (67%) were also popular. Please see Figure 8.

In the Other category, respondents requested vegetables like zucchini, garlic, leafy greens, broccoli, and cauliflower. We also heard that our colleagues like Northwest Harvest and the Emergency Food Network also distribute produce including potatoes and onions. Some agencies are concerned about that product overlapping with our offerings.
**Desired Produce Items from Food Lifeline**

(Check all that apply)
213 respondents

- Citrus (oranges, grapefruit, etc.)
- Apples
- Melons (honeydew, watermelon, etc.)
- Stone fruit (peaches, plums, etc.)
- Potatoes
- Lettuce
- Pears
- Onions
- Other (please specify)

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**Figure 8: Desired Produce Items from Food Lifeline (question 20)**

**WHAT WE’RE DOING**

Our food resources department used your feedback to develop a procurement plan for the year. They created a calendar and prioritized the kinds of produce you are looking for. Where possible, we have also tried to stagger our incoming shipments of produce. This helps ensure we have a variety of items rather than too much of one thing.

Food Lifeline recently co-founded two organizations designed to increase and improve the fruits and vegetables we can procure. We created Feeding Washington in partnership with Second Harvest Inland Northwest in Spokane. Similarly, Feeding the Northwest is a partnership between Food Lifeline, Second Harvest Inland Northwest, The Idaho Food Bank, and the Oregon Foodbank. Though we are still identifying needs and defining goals, one of our founding priorities was to improve the quality and quantity of produce sourced within our service region. To date, Food Lifeline has purchased more than 15 million pounds of produce through Feeding Washington. We expect to see significant growth in produce procurement via these channels in the coming years.

**CHALLENGES TO INCREASED PRODUCE**

We asked survey respondents what we can do to support their organization taking more produce. We received short answer responses from 93 people, then grouped them into categories. Issues around logistics were described by 23% of respondents. This category is further broken down in the next paragraph. Case and tote sizes were again named an obstacle for 17% of respondents. Sixteen percent said that they
would accept more produce if we granted them access to online ordering. Increasing the variety of produce was an issue for 14%, while 10% said they wanted us to ensure high-quality produce before they could accept more.

We broke down the logistics issues reported by 23% of respondents into more specific challenges. Nine percent said that they could accept more produce if we made our delivery schedule better match their distribution days. Nearly 8% said they needed more cooler space to store more produce. Two percent of respondents cited storage space in general; another 2% said vehicle space was their challenge.

Respondents shared other issues with us, including challenges with the quality of produce sourced through grocery rescue, the potential cost of additional produce, and needing additional volunteers to sort and package the product.

**WHAT WE’RE DOING**

This year we made more produce available in smaller pack sizes. We are also reviewing our process for granting new agencies access to online ordering. We will continue to demand high-quality produce from our donors and retail partners.

In early 2019, we will also review our schedules for agency pickups and RDO distributions. When we are ready to make changes to these schedules, we will invite feedback and participation from the partner network. Please keep an eye out for email or e-newsletter contact when we are ready to make these logistics changes.

**VI. Agency Programs**

**SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES**

We asked you what was working well at your agency, and 139 of you shared your thoughts. We heard that many of you have supportive communities and great volunteers. Some of you reported switching to distribution models like client choice that emphasize the dignity of the people we serve. Others added new distribution days or expanded the hours you were open to meet the growing need in your communities. Some of you successfully obtained grants or local funding to buy new equipment, and a few of you moved into larger buildings.

We also received 150 responses about the challenges your agencies are facing. A large number of you cited increased need this year, and the impacts that has had on the size of your organization and the amount of food you have been able to offer. Many of you cited food shortages, not enough funding, not enough volunteers, or aging volunteers. Some of you said that the food you pick up through the grocery rescue program is inconsistent in quality.
WHAT WE'RE DOING

It's striking that the same areas of success for some agencies are challenges for other agencies. No community in Western Washington is identical to another, but every agency adapts and changes over time to meet their community’s needs. Many of you communicate with colleagues through contacts you’ve built up over years working in the emergency food system. Others joined or organized local coalitions to better plan ways to meet your region’s need.

We are designing the 2019 Partner Agency Conference to continue building these connections. Whether you are new to food banking or have done it for years, we all have lessons we can teach each other. We will be emphasizing local success and want people in our network to share what’s worked for them.

HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Last year we heard that many food bank agencies are exploring partnerships with other organizations that offer support services in their communities. Sometimes formed as multi-service agencies, these partnerships help connect food-insecure clients to health insurance, access to libraries or community centers, provide voter registration, or offer collocated medical or dental care. This year we asked about the types of healthcare services you offer clients at your agency.

More than 53% of respondents said they offered their clients access to health insurance enrollment, either through internal support (like a multi-service center) or by hosting an external organization at their site. Referrals to primary care were offered by 39% of respondents, and 24% offer blood pressure screenings. Dental services were offered by 21% of agency respondents, and help with chronic disease management was available at 18% of agencies. A sizable majority of agencies offer these services through external partnerships. Please see Figure 9.
**Figure 9: Healthcare Services Offered to Clients by Agencies (question 24)**

We also asked about the types of referrals you offer clients. We combined the 205 responses into three types: active engagement, passive engagement, or no engagement. These types are described in the table below.

The highest area of active engagement for referrals was housing, with 31% of responding agencies actively connecting their clients. Healthcare referrals were the highest passive referrals, with 55% of responding agencies saying they share information or provide it upon request. Connections to other sources of food had the highest level of engagement, active or passive, with 87% of agencies offering these referrals. *Please see Table 1.*
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<tr>
<th>What type of referrals do you provide to clients in these categories?</th>
<th>Other food services</th>
<th>Healthcare</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have a caseworker on staff</td>
<td>11.27%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>19.21%</td>
<td>13.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make phone calls on behalf of clients</td>
<td>2.45%</td>
<td>4.50%</td>
<td>3.94%</td>
<td>2.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track referrals and follow up with clients</td>
<td>1.96%</td>
<td>2.00%</td>
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<td>1.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively provide referrals during intake</td>
<td>13.24%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide resources (written, verbal, posted)</td>
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<td>Provide passively on request from clients</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not provide any information</td>
<td>13.24%</td>
<td>23.00%</td>
<td>25.12%</td>
<td>29.21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Referrals Agencies Provide to Clients by Category

**WHAT WE’RE DOING**

The information you provided helped us in planning our strategies around community programs and how we can help connect people who need food with other needed social services. For instance, Food Lifeline helped convene a group of stakeholders in South Snohomish County to discuss and develop strategies that focus on opportunities at the intersection between hunger and health.

Local agencies in South Snohomish County are carrying forward elements of that group’s work by partnering with healthcare organizations, schools, and other community-based organizations. We are also exploring the possibility of launching
mobile food programs in Snohomish County health clinics like the ones we currently operate with Sea Mar Community Health Centers in King County.

EXPANSION TO UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

We asked respondents if they knew of a community that was either unserved or underserved by existing feeding programs. We asked specifically if the community could benefit from a mobile food or other feeding program. Of the 206 respondents, more than 34% did not know if there was. Almost 29% said that they knew of a community that needed greater access to food. Another 24% of respondents said there was maybe a community like that, and nearly 13% of respondents said there was not one in their area.

WHAT WE’RE DOING

Like the 34% of respondents who did not know if there was an underserved or unserved community in need, we still have a lot to learn in this area. We’d like to keep working with agency partners to find solutions that we can tailor to fit each community.

This year Food Lifeline is joining forces with Second Harvest in Spokane to launch a Hunger in Washington study. This local update to the 2014 Hunger in America study (administered nationally by Feeding America) will help us collect more data about the level and types of need in our state. We plan to work alongside other organizations who collect information about food insecurity in Washington. We are also making plans to offer client data collection software Link2Feed to the network, first through a limited pilot, and later as an opt-in service for agencies. Though we are still in the early planning stages, our goals are to keep costs low and offer training and technical support to interested partner agencies.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION TRAINING

We asked about the types of DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) training agencies provided to their staff or volunteers. Of the 207 respondents, more than 46% of respondents said they provided at least some type of training. An additional 35% said they did not, but they would be interested in it.
Figure 10: Agencies Currently Providing DEI Training (question 26)

We asked respondents who said yes to describe the training they provided. Of the 70 responses, at least 14 cited the USDA civil rights course as a component of their volunteer orientation. Others have hosted trainings by a DEI consultant or local government office; some have a diversity and inclusion committee in their organization. Still others state that they treat all people equally without describing what that means in practice.

WHAT WE’RE DOING

Food Lifeline is on a transformational journey to integrate equity and inclusion into our organizational culture, policies, practices, programs and services. We know that historical and persistent systemic inequity, especially institutionalized racism, is a root cause of poverty and hunger, and as such, we acknowledge that it is core to achieving our mission that we create a more equitable and inclusive environment for our staff, our community partners and people experiencing hunger.

Food Lifeline recently hired an equity and inclusion consultant to help guide our organization through that transformation. We are also hiring a Director of Equity and Inclusion to help lead this work within the organization. We recognize that poverty is bound to racist systems that were enshrined decades ago and still operate today. Until we replace those systems, they will continue to be built upon.

As we learn our role in this system, we may update our policies, contracts, and practices. We will work side by side with our colleagues and network partners to make lasting improvements to the world we share. Our colleagues in this work, such as Northwest Harvest, recently offered an equity workshop to their external partners. We are excited to join their efforts in combating racism.
VI. Long-term planning

Our next set of questions asked about agencies’ plans for growth in the next two years. We used the responses to better understand how we can support agencies to expand capacity in the areas they have prioritized.

EXPANDING SERVICES

We asked agencies if they had plans to increase or expand services within the next two years. In this case, we defined services to mean either the distribution hours or days, or the number of meals or pounds distributed to clients.

Of the 210 respondents, 49% said they were planning to expand services. A little more than 20% said they don’t currently have plans, but they plan to do so in the future. Another 16% said no, citing capacity issues as the reason. Finally, 14% of respondents said they have no plans to expand because they are currently meeting the need in their community. Please see Figure 11.

![Agencies' Plans to Increase or Expand Services in the Next Two Years](image)

*Figure 11: Agencies’ Plans to Increase or Expand Services in the Next Two Years (question 28)*

We also asked respondents about the challenges they face to expanding services. We received 141 short answer responses, which we grouped into categories. Nearly 38% of the responses listed more than one challenge in their answer. We counted each issue separately into these categories:

- Equipment (coolers, freezers, or vehicles)
- Facility (the size, condition, or location of the physical space)
- Food (available food from grocery rescue or online ordering)
- Funding (grants or gifts)
- Logistics (project planning, schedule or process changes)
- Other (challenge that does not fit any category)
- Personnel (paid staff or volunteers)

With these categories, we learned that 37% of respondents faced challenges with their facility. Nearly 20% would need more funding to expand services. Hiring staff or building a stronger volunteer workforce was a challenge for almost 18% of respondents. Six percent said they would need either new equipment or repairs to existing equipment.

The next question was similar, asking respondents the top resources or supports needed by their agency to overcome the challenges they note. Many responses came down to funding. Getting the timing of the changes right was also important to many respondents, as was building a stronger volunteer base.

**WHAT WE’RE DOING**

Food Lifeline’s strategic plans include an ambitious goal of doubling the number of meals we and our agency partners can distribute through the network by 2026. We can achieve this by setting priorities and finding solutions for the challenges listed above. As we begin this work, we will partner with RDOs and the network to increase distribution capacity by planning, asking for, and making investments needed to serve our communities. Our entire strategic plan will be shared in early 2019.

**VII. Final Comments**

We believe the agency survey told us a lot about the network in 2018, but there is more we need to know. We made changes based on the feedback we received, and we will continue to do so as the year goes on.

The next partner agency survey will launch in April 2019, and the questions will change based on our strategic priorities. Looking ahead, we are also excited to host the 2019 Partner Agency Conference in May. This spring we will also share the latest version of our 2018-2021 strategic plan. Next year, when we begin work on our strategic plan for 2021-2024 and beyond, we are looking forward to inviting you all into that process.

There is a lot we can accomplish together, and we won’t lose sight of our collective goal to end hunger in Western Washington and beyond.