

5. Profile of Community Food Resources

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5. Profile of Community Food Resources

5.1 Purpose

To understand the adequacy of community food resources, you must begin by creating a profile of all existing resources. The questions guiding this profile include:

- Are Federal food assistance programs available to help people purchase food?
- Are people in the community participating in food assistance programs?
- What resources are available in the community for purchasing food?
- Are emergency resources available in the event that residents do not have enough money to purchase food through normal channels?

This profile will help you understand how well equipped your community is to meet the food-related needs of its residents.

Federal Food Assistance Program Resources

Each year the U.S. Department of Agriculture spends billions of dollars to provide food assistance programs for low-income people. For these programs to reach those in need, local communities must have an infrastructure that can deliver food assistance benefits effectively. (The Federal food assistance programs are described in box 10).

Federal Food Assistance Program Participation

Data on participation in Federal food assistance and emergency assistance programs can be useful as a measure of the number of people or households in your community that may have difficulty meeting their food needs. However, such data must be interpreted with caution because the data may:

- Underestimate need when not everyone who needs a service or program uses it (e.g., by choice, lack of awareness, or eligibility).
- Overestimate need when counts are duplicated (e.g., the number of individuals who visit a specific emergency kitchen in any given month).

Retail Resources for Food Purchases

Access to supermarkets, grocery stores, and other food stores can affect significantly the quality and affordability of food available to consumers in your community, including the ability of low-income households to use Federal food assistance programs, such as WIC and the Food Stamp Program, that operate through retail markets. Other places to purchase food can complement traditional food retailers. For example, farmers' markets and food cooperatives can offer locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables and can provide substantial discounts. The data collected in this profile will provide you with details on the number, type, and location of all retail food resources, food cooperatives, and farmers' markets.

Emergency Food Resources

Alternative sources of food for people who may need additional crisis support are known as locally based emergency food providers. Emergency food providers include food pantries, soup kitchens, food banks, and other community-based food distribution programs. The information that you will need to collect will often be available through your local government offices and agencies; churches, synagogues, and community centers; or a special information hotline or outreach program that may exist in some communities.

5.2 Analysis

As with the profile of community characteristics, the presentation of data collected for a profile of community resources will be descriptive. Although the information can be presented on its own (using maps, charts, and graphs), for the most part, the

information gathered as part of this profile will provide the basis for the other assessment components in this toolkit. For example, data on the number of food assistance program sites and participation levels can be used in the assessment of accessibility or availability. Thus, it is important that the profile use data that are as up to date as possible.

Box 10

Federal Food Assistance Programs: An Overview

Food Stamp Program

The Food Stamp Program is the cornerstone of the USDA food assistance programs serves millions of Americans each day. Eligible participants receive benefits to purchase food at authorized food stores and farmers' markets. Restaurants and group feeding sites can be authorized to accept food stamps for meals provided to the homeless, elderly, and people with disabilities. Eligibility and benefits are based largely on household size, income, and assets. More information about the Food Stamp Program is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/fsp].

National School Lunch Program

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) provides nutritious lunches to about 27 million children in 96,000 schools each school day. These lunches must meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and other nutrition standards. The NSLP provides cash and commodity support for meals served by public and private nonprofit elementary and secondary schools and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that opt to enroll and guarantee to offer free or reduced-price meals to eligible low-income children.

The NSLP operates as a three-tiered system. For children whose family incomes are below 130 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines, the meals are free. For children whose family income is between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty guidelines, the program restricts lunch costs to no more than 40 cents. The NSLP provides a small per meal subsidy for "full-price" meals for children who do not receive free or reduced-price meals. More than half of the lunches served in the NSLP are free or at reduced price. More information about the NSLP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch].

School Breakfast Program

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is similar to the NSLP in that it provides for Federal cash and commodity support for meals served by public and private nonprofit elementary and secondary schools residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that opt to enroll and guarantee to offer free or reduced-price meals to eligible low-income children.

The program uses the three-tiered approach (described above) to ensuring that low-income children receive a free or reduced-cost breakfast as they arrive at school in the morning. Unlike the NSLP, the great majority (84 percent in FY 2000) of children enrolled in the program receive free or reduced-price meals. More than half of the children in the United States attend schools that offer the SBP. More information about the SBP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast].

Box 10

Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs: An Overview (continued)

Child and Adult Care Food Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides healthful meals and snacks for children and adults enrolled in a variety of day-care settings. The program reimburses participating day-care providers for serving meals that meet Federal guidelines. It operates in family or group day-care homes, child care centers, adult day-care centers for elderly and impaired adults, emergency shelters that provide meals to homeless children, and after-school programs that provide educational or enrichment activities. More information about the CACFP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Care/cafp].

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program (SFSP) for Women, Infants, and Children (the WIC program) provides food assistance, nutrition risk screening, and related services (e.g., nutrition education and breastfeeding support) to low-income pregnant and postpartum women and their infants, as well as low-income children up to age 5. Participants in the program must have a family income at or below 185 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines and must be judged to be nutritionally at risk. Nutritional risk is defined as detectable abnormal nutritional conditions, documented nutrition-related medical conditions, health-impairing dietary deficiencies, or conditions that predispose people to inadequate nutrition or nutrition-related medical problems. More information about the WIC program is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/wic].

Summer Food Service Program

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides free meals to children during school vacations in areas where at least half of the children are from households with incomes at or below 185 percent of the poverty guidelines. Any child in the operating area may participate without needing to pass an eligibility test. Local sponsors, who are reimbursed by USDA, operate the program. Sponsors may be schools, units of local government, public or nonprofit private residential camps, other nonprofit private organizations, and colleges or universities participating in the National Youth Sports Program. More information about the SFSP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer].

The Emergency Food Assistance Program

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) provides commodity foods to States for distribution to households, soup kitchens, and food banks. First initiated in 1981 as the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, TEFAP was designed to reduce inventories and storage costs of surplus commodities through distribution to needy households. Although some surplus food is still distributed through TEFAP, Congress since 1989 has appropriated funds to purchase additional commodities for households. States are also provided funds for administrative costs. More information about TEFAP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/fdd].

Commodity Supplemental Food Program

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is a direct food distribution program that serves the elderly and low-income women and children. Similar to WIC, this program distributes food packages tailored to the nutritional needs of participants. More information about the CSFP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/fdd].

Box 10

Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs: An Overview (continued)

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) is a Federal program that provides commodity foods to low-income households, including the elderly living on Indian reservations, and to Native American families residing in designated areas near reservations. Many Native Americans participate in the FDPIR as an alternative to the Food Stamp Program, usually because they do not have easy access to food stores. More information about the FDPIR is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/fdd].

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) was established in 1992 to provide WIC participants with increased access to fresh produce. WIC participants are given coupons to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at authorized local farmers' markets. The program is funded through a legislatively mandated set-aside in the WIC program appropriation. More information about the WIC FMNP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/wic].

Nutrition Services Incentives Program (NSIP)

The Nutrition Services Incentives Program provides cash and commodities to States for meals for senior citizens. The food is delivered through senior citizen centers or Meals On Wheels programs located throughout the country. More information is available at [www.aoa.gov/nutrition].

5.3 Indicators

Indicator	Appendix	Data Collection Tool
Federal Food Assistance Programs—Number and Location		
Number and location of Food Stamp Program application sites	A	Tables 3 and 4
Number and location of WIC clinics	A	Tables 3 and 4
Number and location of schools with National School Lunch Program	A	Tables 3 and 4
Number and location of schools with School Breakfast Program	A	Tables 3 and 4
Number and location of Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) providers	A	Tables 3 and 4
Number and location of Summer Food Service Program sites	A	Tables 3 and 4
Number and location of TEFAP and CSFP distribution sites	A	Tables 3 and 4
Number and location of WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program sites	A	Tables 3 and 4
Number and location of Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) sites	A	Tables 3 and 4
Number and location of elderly nutrition programs	A	Tables 3 and 4
Federal Food Assistance Programs—Participation		
Participation in Food Stamp Program	A	Table 3
Participation in WIC Program	A	Table 3
Participation in National School Lunch Program	A	Table 3
Participation in School Breakfast Program	A	Table 3
Participation in CACFP	A	Table 3
Participation in Summer Food Service Program	A	Table 3
Participation in TEFAP distribution	A	Table 3
Participation in WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program	A	Table 3
Participation in Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)	A	Table 3
Participation in Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)	A	Table 3
Participation in Meals On Wheels Program	A	Table 3
Participation in Nutrition Services Incentives Program (NSIP)	A	Table 3
Retail Stores and Other Places To Purchase Food		
Availability of authorized food stamp retailers	A	Table 5
Number, type, and location of retail food stores	A	Tables 6 and 7
Number and location of consumer food cooperatives	A	Table 8
Number and location of farmers' markets	A	Table 9
Emergency Food Assistance Providers		
Number, location, and times of operation of food banks	A	Tables 10 and 11
Number, location, and times of operation of food pantries	A	Tables 10 and 11
Number, location, and times of operation of emergency kitchens	A	Tables 10 and 11