



JOHNSON COUNTY Social Services

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Johnson County Hunger Task Force Report

February 26, 2016

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Need

In August 2014, at the direction of the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, the Johnson County Hunger Task Force was created to address the increasing number of residents facing food insecurity. Food insecurity is a broadly used measure of food deprivation in the United States. The USDA defines food insecurity as meaning “consistent access to adequate food is limited by lack of money and other resources at times during the year.”

Feeding America has estimated that 1 in every 7 Johnson County residents is in need of food assistance (2013). 40% of those are above the 185% income eligibility criteria and do not qualify for governmental food assistance programs. The chart below, from *Iowa State University Extension and Outreach's Poverty and Food Needs for Johnson County*, provides a county and state comparison of food insecure individuals by income. Johnson County has a higher percentage of food insecure residents than the state, but at 14.2% is slightly lower than the national rate of 15.8%.

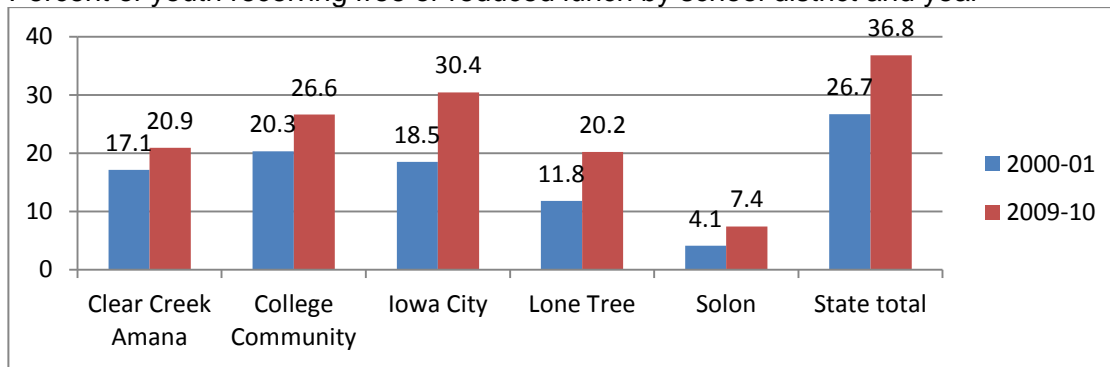
| | <u>Johnson County</u> | <u>Statewide</u> |
|---|-----------------------|------------------|
| <i>Individuals who are food insecure</i> | | |
| Number of persons..... | 18,640 | 389,730 |
| % of total population..... | 14.2% | 12.7% |
| <i>Food insecure individuals with incomes <= 185% of poverty</i> | | |
| Number of persons..... | 11,184 | 234,618 |
| % of total population..... | 8.5% | 7.6% |
| <i>Food insecure individuals with incomes >185% of poverty</i> | | |
| Number of persons..... | 7,456 | 155,113 |
| % of total population..... | 5.7% | 5.0% |

Map the Meal Gap; Feeding America 2012

Children

Children in households with income at or below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines are eligible for free lunch. Children from households with income between 130% and 185% are eligible for reduced lunch. According to the Iowa Department of Education, Basic Educational Data Survey (BEDS) as published in the United Way of Johnson and Washington County's Community Indicator's Report, every school district in Johnson County experienced an increase in the percent of kids that qualify for and participate in either free or reduced lunches. Between 2000 and 2010 the number of children eligible for free and reduced lunch jumped 64% in the Iowa City Community School District and 71% in Lone Tree compared with a statewide increase of 38%. In 2014-2015 the free and reduced lunch rate in the Iowa City Community School District climbed to 33.7%.

Percent of youth receiving free or reduced lunch by school district and year

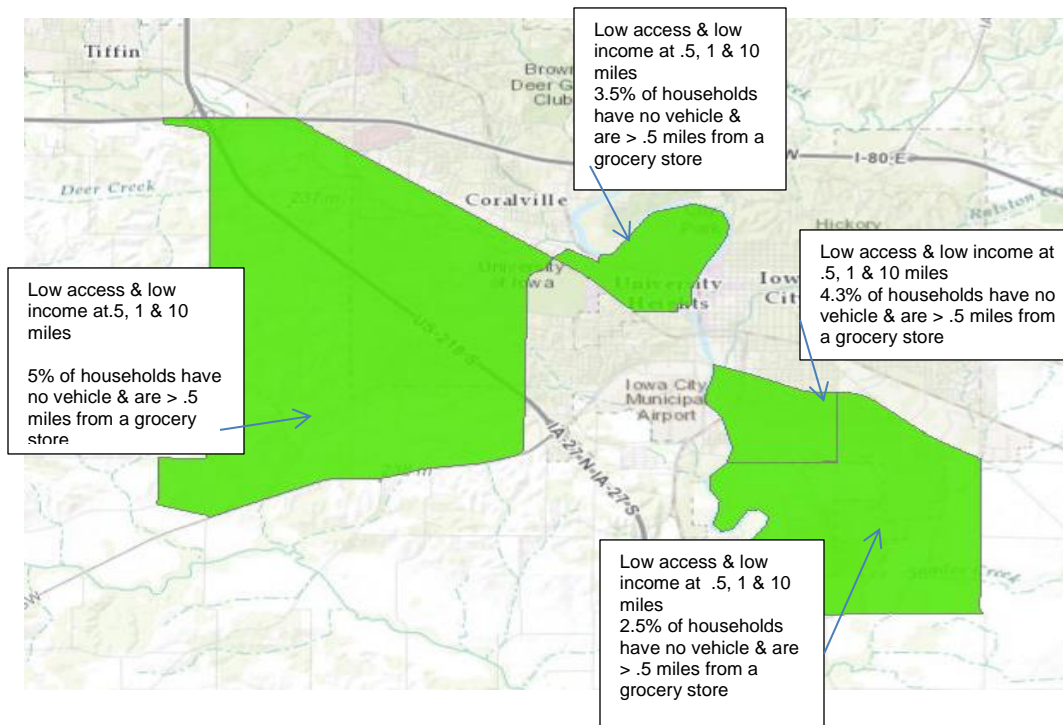


Seniors

According to Feeding America, in 2014, 9% of American seniors aged 65 and older experienced food insecurity. In Johnson County the poverty rate for seniors living in poverty increased 63% from 3.8% to 6.1% between 2000 and 2008 (*United Way of Johnson and Washington County's Community Indicator Report*). Food security barriers for seniors may include limited finances, but also encompass their ability to access food sources which may be comprised by mobility issues and lack of transportation.

Food Deserts

According to the USDA's Food Access Research Atlas, Johnson County has four tracts that qualify as a food desert. To qualify as a food desert an area must have a poverty rate greater than 20%, or the tract's median family income must be less than or equal to 80% of the statewide median family income or the tract is in a metro area and has a median family income less than or equal to 80% of the metro area's median family income AND there must be at least 500 people and/or at least 33% of the tract's population living more than one mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from a grocery store. An additional measure includes a .5 mile distance in urban areas with at least 100 households and no access to a vehicle.



Areas included in the food deserts include a large geographical region from 2nd Street in Coralville stretching south to Highway 1 S and bordered by Kansas Ave and Mormon Trek, the area of Riverside Dr. from Highway 6 to Napoleon St. SE and Scott Blvd. and the heavily student populated, Manville Heights southwest to Melrose Avenue.

Hunger Task Force

The Johnson County Hunger Task Force (JCHTF) cast a wide net, bringing together individuals across disciplines to collectively discuss challenges, gaps and opportunities to decrease food insecurity in Johnson County. The JCHTF met on 10 different occasions between October 2014 and February 2016. More than 60 individuals, including several local and state elected officials, community members, faith leaders, providers, and growers participated in at least one Task Force meeting. There was an average of 15 attendees per meeting. Additional individuals participated in subcommittee meetings. The email distribution list for the JCHTF includes nearly 150 interested community members from diverse backgrounds.

Hunger Task Force Subcommittees

Early on, through a priority setting exercise, the JCHTF established four priority areas; collaboration, healthy foods, access, advocacy and funding. Subcommittees were formed for the first three while it was determined that the establishment of the Advocacy and Funding Subcommittees would occur after the Access Subcommittee completed a community assessment and the JCHTF developed a set of recommendations.

- **Collaboration Subcommittee** established the following priorities: 1.) Improve education and communication between funders, providers and those in need 2.) Identify available resources, needs and issues, outcomes and impact.

This committee explored the idea of a shared data system for the food pantries, generated suggestions for local funders to work more collaboratively and discussed the need for a pantry point-in-time survey. The point-in-time survey was delegated to the Access Subcommittee. The Collaboration Subcommittee intends to reconvene, if needed, following approval of the JCHTF recommendations.

- **Healthy Foods Subcommittee** established the following priorities 1.) Increase accessibility to healthy food 2.) Increase education on nutrition, food preparation and budgeting 3.) Improve nutritional value of food available 4.) Develop a cost efficient network making healthy food available to those in need 5.) Increase access to diverse, fresh and local foods for everyone 6.) Increase food choices at pantries, including food to meet cultural needs.

The Healthy Foods Subcommittee sponsored a community meal on September 11, 2015 with the Coralville Ecumenical Food Pantry and the Hunger Task Force serving as the hosts. Locally sourced foods were used in the meal. Outreach for the event was targeted to food insecure households. The 150 individuals attending the event enjoyed a great meal, music, activities and received recipes for the food served. The subcommittee developed a tool kit for easy replication of community meals. Moving forward the committee would like to expand to offer three – four community meal events annually.

- **Access Subcommittee** established the following priorities 1.) Assess unmet food

needs and increase access points where needed 2.) Develop recommendation to increase access and reduce barriers to obtaining unmet food needs.

The Access Subcommittee developed and conducted surveys with providers, key informants, pantry guests and food insecure residents not accessing services. The committee reviewed and analyzed data and prepared a comprehensive summary of findings on the barriers and potential service, system and outreach needs that could help to reduce food insecurity in Johnson County.

Community Assessments

- **Key Informant Interviews and Focus Groups**
- **Food Pantry Recipient Survey**
- **Food Interview with food insecure residents not accessing services**
- **Food Assistance Provider Survey**
- **Spatial Analysis of Food Access in Johnson County**

Assessment Findings

Key Informant and Focus Groups

The goal of the key informant interviews and focus groups was to reach out to community members who may be directly or indirectly serving food insecure individuals and have special insight into the barriers and needs of a specific population or geographical region.

Key informant interviews were held with:

- Jama Lidral, Free Lunch Program
- Joan VandenBerg, Iowa City Community School District
- Pastor Diane Townsley, Oxford United Methodist Church
- Tess Knox, Social Worker at Clear Creek Amana School District

Focus groups/community meetings were held in:

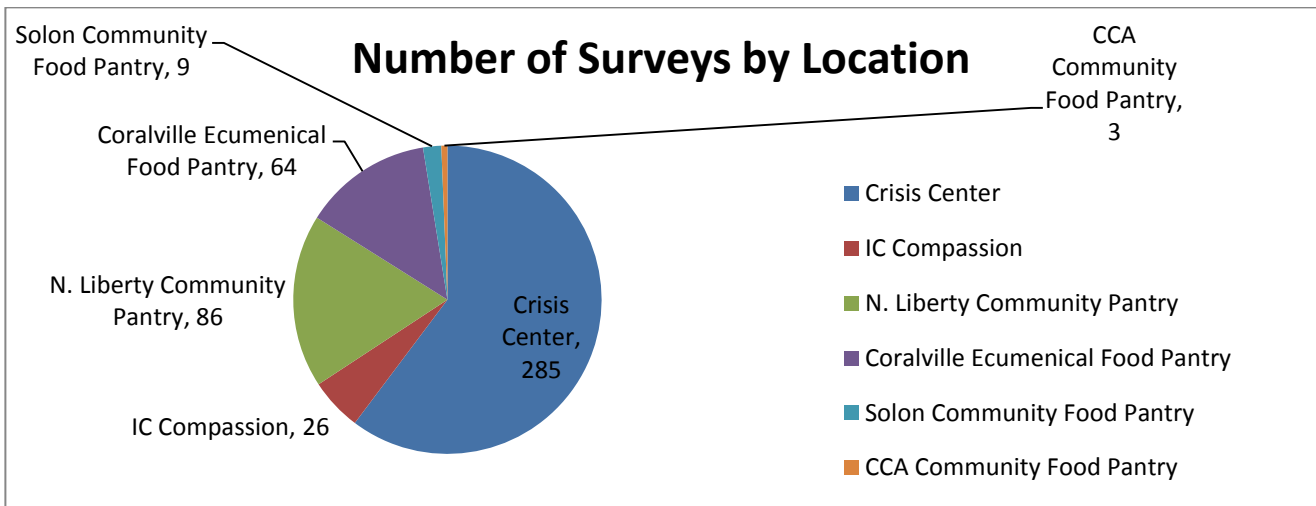
- Shueyville
- Swisher
- North Liberty
- Sharon Center

Throughout the interviews common obstacles to food security identified included; lack of transportation, limited or no programs in the rural areas and lack of knowledge of available services. There were a number of individuals who theorized that some households in need may not access services due to a perceived stigma of doing so or a belief that others have a greater need than they do. When asked for solutions to reduce hunger within their respective communities responses included; a mobile pantry, delivery service, backpack programs, rural bus service, and expanded outreach on available services.

Food Pantry Recipient Survey

The Food Pantry Survey was completed between August 17 and September 5, 2015 at six food pantries including; Crisis Center of Johnson County (CCJC), North Liberty Community

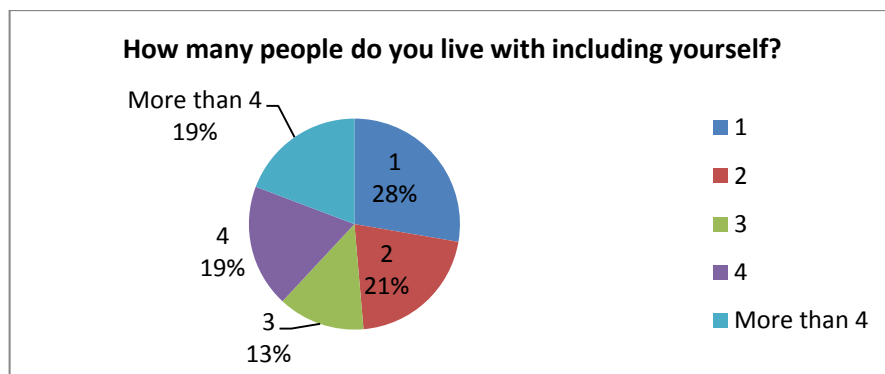
Pantry (NLCP), Coralville Ecumenical Food Panty (CEFP), Iowa City Compassion, Clear Creek Amana Community Food Pantry (CCACFP) and the Solon Community Food Pantry. 473 pantry guests voluntarily completed an in-depth interview-style survey sharing their personal needs, barriers to services and suggestions for improving services and increasing access to food. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish and French. The survey interviews were completed by interns, Ameri-Corps and VISTA workers and volunteers who attended a survey administration training prior to meeting with pantry guests.



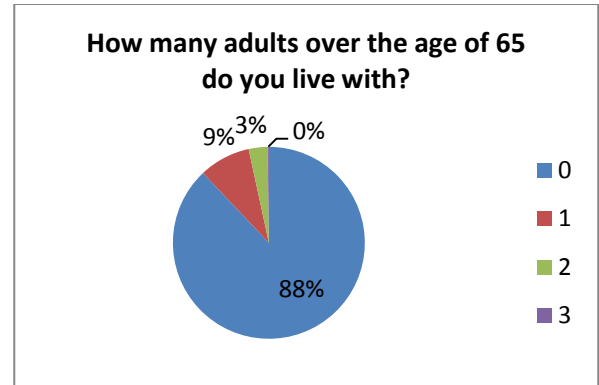
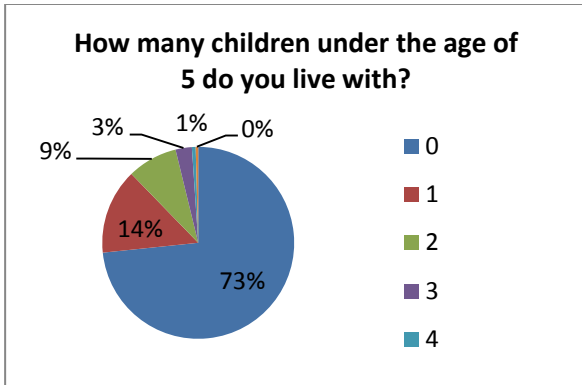
The most surveys were completed at the Crisis Center of Johnson County (60%), the largest area food pantry, followed by the North Liberty Community Pantry (86) and the Coralville Ecumenical Food Pantry (64). Limited surveys were obtained from Solon and Clear Creek Community Pantries due to volunteer scheduling and construction issues.

The following tables summarize results for questions on the Food Pantry Recipient survey.

Household Demographics:

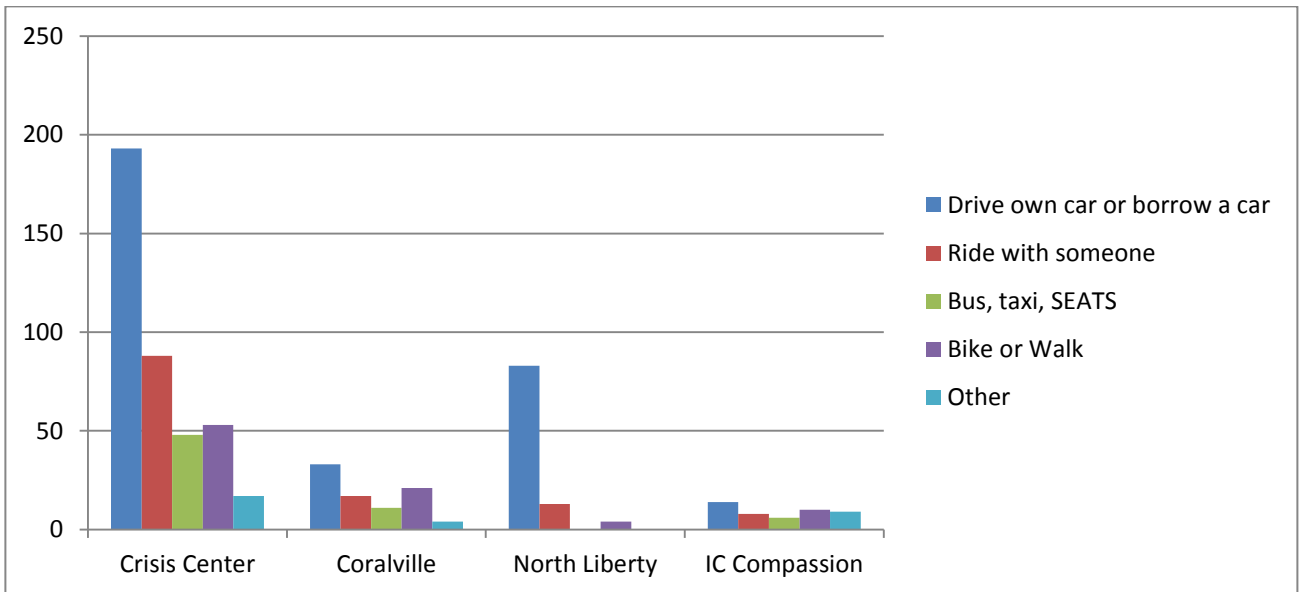


Nearly 50% of the recipients accessing the pantries had one or two people in the household.

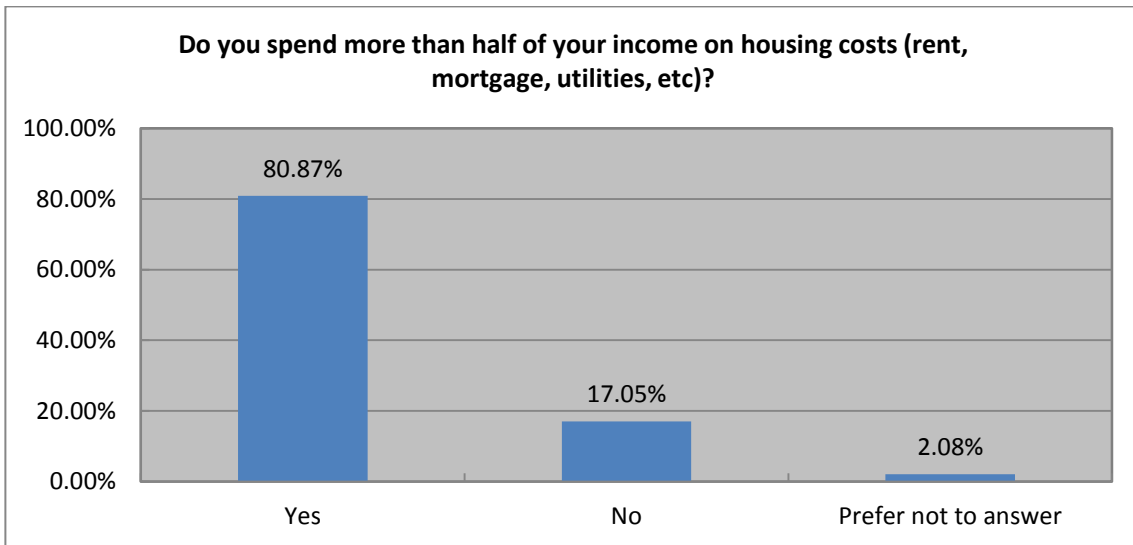


27% of pantry guests reported having at least one child under the age of five in their household while 12% indicated that at least one person in the household was over the age of 65.

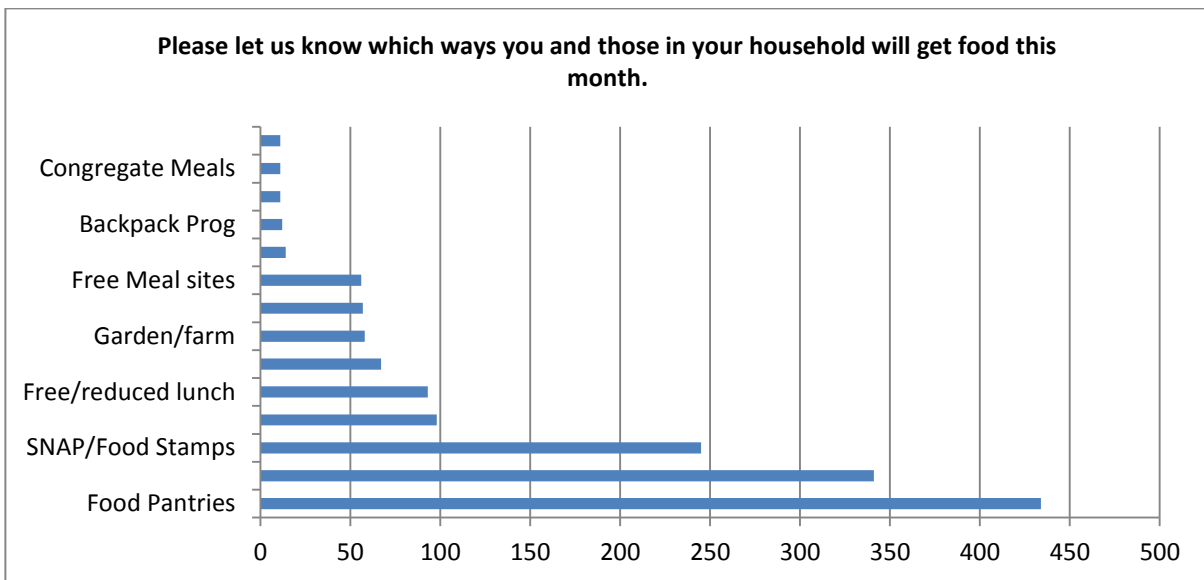
How do you get to this pantry?



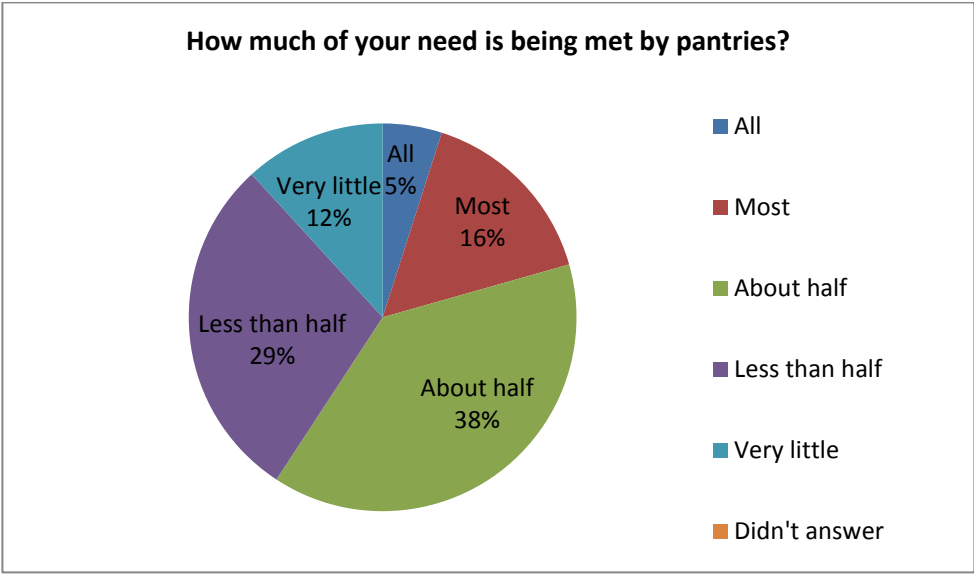
The method of accessing pantries varies considerably depending on the site. For instance, 56% of the Crisis Center guests reported getting to the pantry with their own vehicle or borrowing a vehicle compared with 89% at the North Liberty Community Pantry, 48% at the Coralville Ecumenical Food Pantry and 34% at Iowa City Compassion. A large percentage of guests also used public transportation, walked or biked; Crisis Center (31%), CEFP (43%), and IC Compassion (42%), but only 2% did so at the (NLCP).



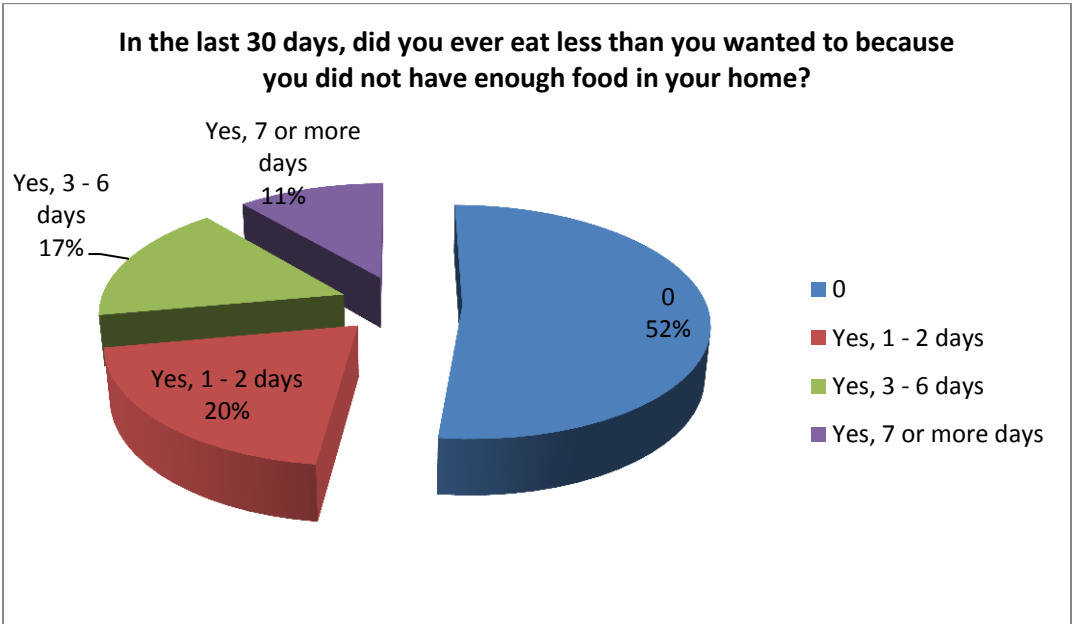
Families that pay more than 30% of their income for housing are considered housing-cost burdened and may have difficulty affording other necessities including food. Families that pay more than 50% for housing are considered severely housing-cost burdened. 81% (416 of 473) of the survey respondents reported being severely housing-cost burdened.



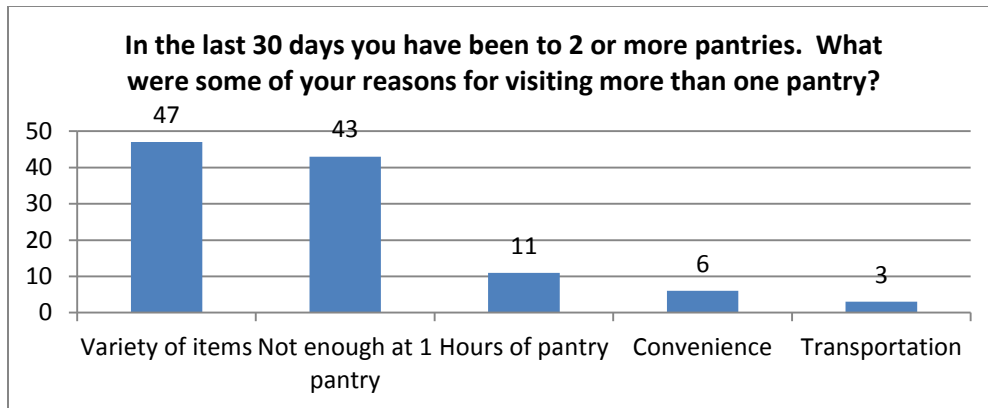
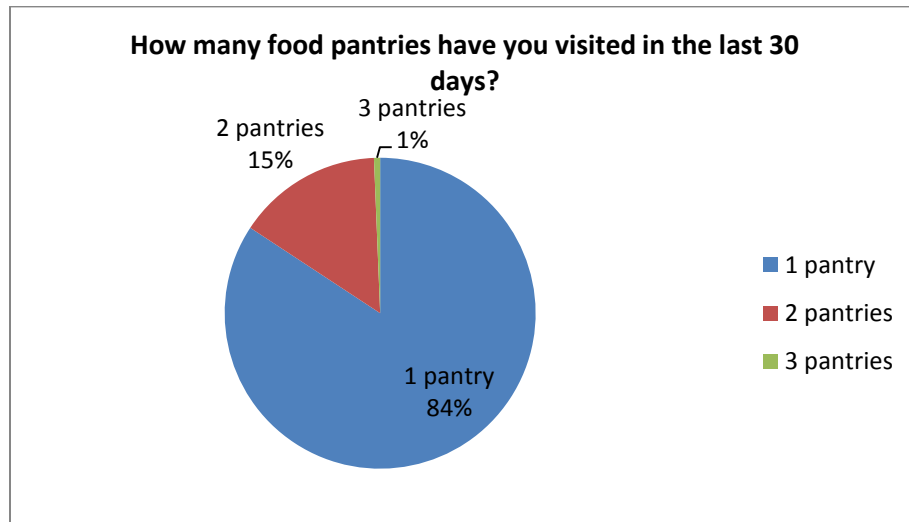
Food pantries were cited as the most common way in which recipient food needs were being met, not surprising since the survey was conducted at pantries. 52% (245) of survey respondents reported receiving SNAP food assistance benefits and 21% relied on family or friends for food.



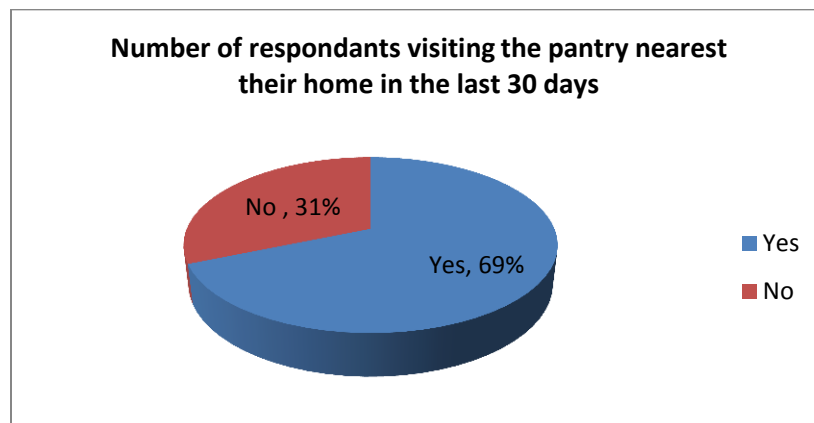
One in five pantry guests reported that the pantry met most or all of their food needs while nearly 6 out of 10 guests reported that half or more of their food needs were met by pantries.

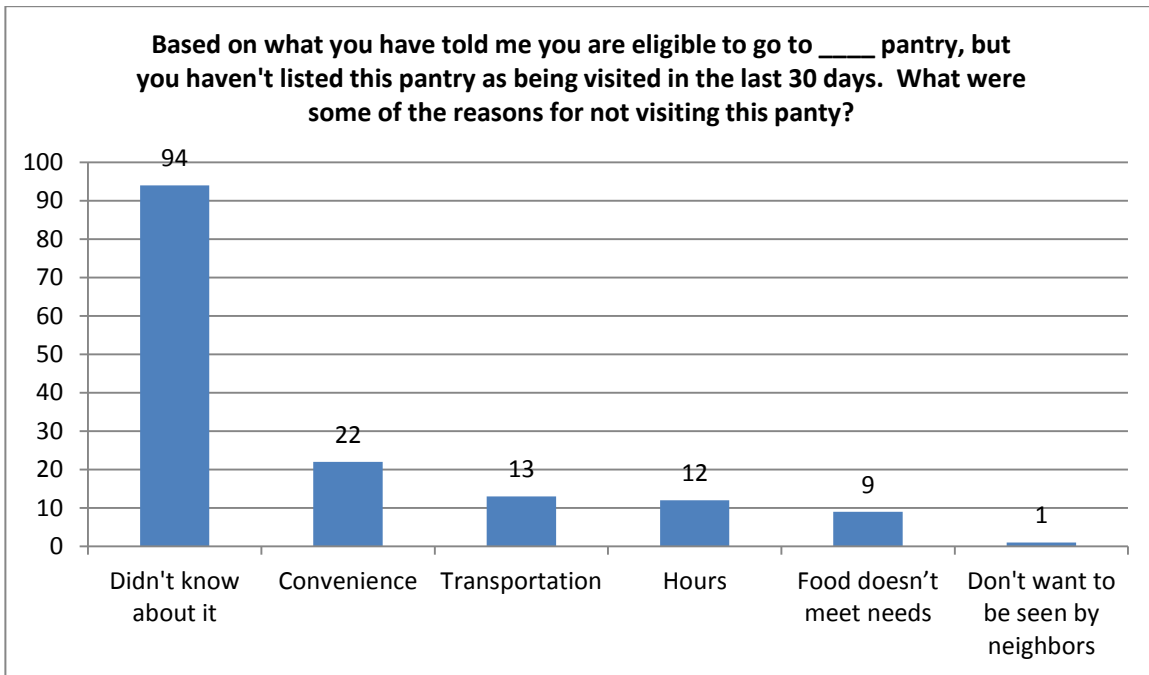


Nearly 50% of all pantry guests reported eating less than they wanted to on at least one occasion in the last 30 days due to insufficient food in the home.



During the previous 30 days 84% of pantry guests indicated visiting only one pantry, 71 or 15% visited two pantries, three visited three pantries, and three people did not respond to the question. Variety of items was identified as the most common reason (54%) for visiting more than one pantry, closely followed by not enough food at one pantry (49%).





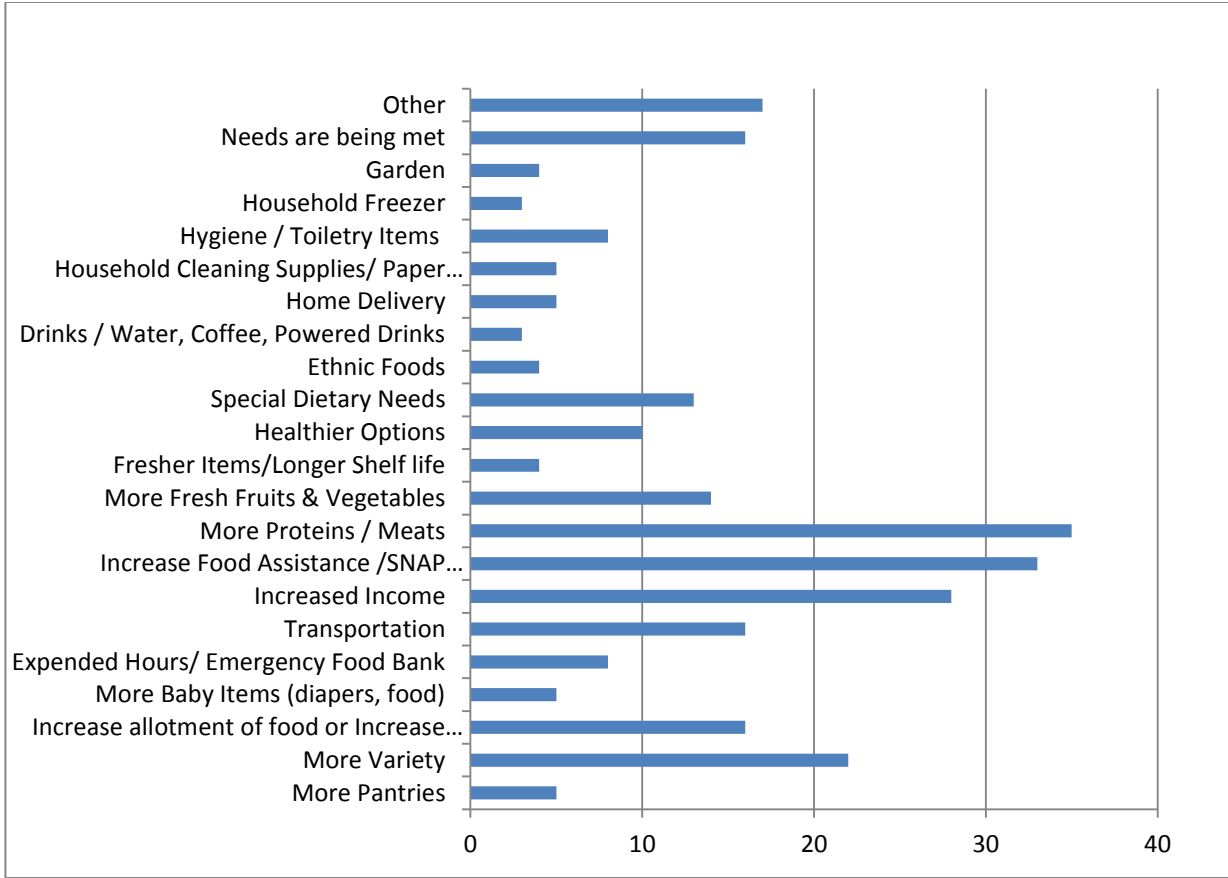
Nearly one-third of the pantry guests surveyed were not at the pantry nearest their home. Overwhelmingly, not knowing about it was the most common reason for not visiting this pantry (64%). Convenience was the second most common response (15%).

If you ran a food pantry, what would you consider the five most important items to keep in stock?

| Item | Frequency | Percent of respondents |
|--------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| Milk | 276 | 58% |
| Fresh vegetables | 259 | 55% |
| Fresh fruit | 249 | 53% |
| Eggs | 230 | 49% |
| Meat | 226 | 48% |
| Bread | 122 | 26% |
| Rice | 89 | 19% |
| Canned vegetables | 78 | 17% |
| Other protein | 74 | 16% |
| Cereal | 72 | 15% |
| Paper products | 62 | 13% |
| Pasta | 60 | 13% |
| Boxed meals | 58 | 12% |
| Hygiene products | 57 | 12% |
| Other dairy | 55 | 12% |
| Beans | 53 | 11% |
| Canned fruit | 52 | 11% |
| Baby Formula | 39 | 8% |
| Cleaning products | 35 | 7% |
| Butter | 33 | 7% |
| Drinks | 27 | 6% |
| Baby food | 24 | 5% |
| Microwavable meals | 13 | 3% |
| Feminine products | 13 | 3% |
| Desserts | 8 | 2% |

Pantry guests prioritized milk, fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, meat and bread as the most important food to stock in a pantry. The items securing the least votes were desserts, microwavable meals and feminine products.

What would help you meet your household needs?



Pantry guests were offered an open-ended question; *what would help you meet your household needs?* 274 responses were provided. The responses were categorized by like answers. The top five responses included 1) More meat and protein 2) More SNAP benefits 3) More income 4) More variety and 5) transportation and increase allotment of food/more frequent pantry visits permitted.

Which of the following programs and services would help meet your food needs?

| Program/Service | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Mobile pantry | 153 | 32% |
| Free community meals | 139 | 29% |
| Home delivery | 123 | 26% |
| Transportation to/from pantry | 104 | 22% |
| Backpack Program | 94 | 20% |
| Summer Lunch Program for Kids | 71 | 15% |
| Help signing up for SNAP | 59 | 13% |
| Senior Dining | 45 | 9.5% |
| Closer access to WIC | 23 | 5% |
| Prefer not to answer | 109 | 23% |

Programs that pantry guests identified that would help to meet food assistance needs were fairly evenly split. Mobile pantry was the most popular option followed by free community meals and home delivery. Senior dining and closer to WIC access were the least popular, however it should be taken into consideration that only 27% of respondents reported having a child under five in the home and 12% having a household member over the age of 65. It was notable that 59 people indicated they would like help signing up for SNAP. There were 228 individuals that did not identify receiving SNAP to meet their household food needs.

Food Interview with food insecure residents not accessing services

The purpose of the food interview was to learn more about the barriers and needs of food insecure residents who were not accessing food assistance programs at the time of the interview. There were many challenges in identifying and locating individuals that met the survey criteria. The goal was to obtain 30 – 40 surveys. Despite rigorous outreach and a small incentive for participation, only nine interviews were conducted. Survey respondents resided in North Liberty, Oxford and Iowa City (mobile home courts and low income senior housing). The interviews were completed by students from the University of Iowa Master of Public Health Qualitative Research class. In addition, the students completed observations in 10 locations, including grocery stores, senior and other dining and pantry sites, and on public transportation.

Common barriers for accessing food that were identified, during interviews, included; lack of knowledge about services, assumption that if ineligible for one service they do not qualify for any services, location of pantries, transportation, operating hours of pantries not conducive for working people or those with children, stigma, fear of lack of confidentiality (more specific to smaller communities) and concern about “taking food away from more deserving people”.

A sampling of quotes from survey participants regarding personal barriers to accessing services:

I think transportation is a major barrier because food boxes are HEAVY. Right? And so, if you're--, 'cause it's all canned goods, dried goods, you know, and that stuff's really heavy. And so if you're takin' the bus, and you have this enormous food box, you know? It's really hard to get it home. So I think transportation is definitely an issue...

I would go once a week every week, but you know, it's hard, the buses don't get close to there and my legs are bad.

I need to use the pantry, but the hours – closing at 4:30, what do you do about the people who get off work? ... They still need you (pantry), because they working that don't mean that they don't need the pantry, you know.

I get \$16 [in food stamps]. And so, my money is limited so I can't spend more than \$50 out of my money. And so that gives me like \$66...it'd be nice to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner, you know. I can't eat breakfast, lunch and dinner now.

Recommendations to reduce barriers included; adding more direct bus routes to pantries and grocery stores, adding more weekend and evening routes and expansion to rural areas, mobile food pantries, food stands, increase outreach and awareness regarding

food resources, expanded hours at existing pantries, more physical space for pantries and educate the public on the face of food insecurity in Johnson County.

Food Assistance Provider Survey

An electronic survey was sent to 16 food assistance providers, predominately pantry and dining program directors, to gather information on program eligibility criteria, data and demographics, organizational and client needs and potential solutions to address the need. 12 providers responded to the survey some via telephone interviews. Seven pantries, three dining sites and two suppliers (HACAP and WIC) responded to the survey.

How often can clients use your food-related services?

1 time per week 6 of 7 pantries
 As much as needed 1 of 7 pantries 3 of 3 dining programs

The average pounds of food provided per visit, at the five pantries that tracked weight, ranged between 20 – 34 pounds with an average of 24.45 pounds.

Does your organization deliver to the ill, aged, or those unable to come themselves?

Yes 2 of 7 pantries (one for illness and short-term only, the other doesn't publicize)
 No 5 of 7 pantries

Elder Services was the only program identified providing delivery service of prepared meals.

Can others pick up food for friends or family who can't get it themselves?

Yes 6 of 7 pantries 1 of 3 dining sites
 Case by case basis 1 of 7 pantries

What are the eligibility criteria for your program?

Resident of specific city 2 of 7 pantries
 Resident of County 1 of 7 pantries 1 of 3 dining programs
 Picture ID 2 of 7 pantries
 No criteria 4 of 7 pantries 2 of 3 dining programs

Are you receiving Table to Table donations?

Yes 7 of 7 pantries 2 of 3 dining programs

Do you receive donations of fresh produce?

Yes 3 of 7 pantries 2 of 3 dining programs
 No 4 of 7 pantries (3 of 4 interested) 1 of 3 dining programs (1 interested)

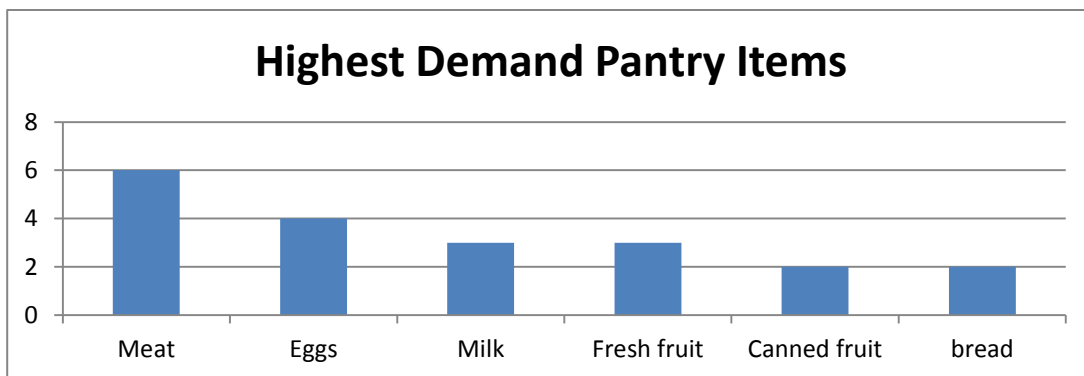
What are the most and least popular fresh fruits and vegetables?

| Pantries | | Dining Programs | | |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Most Popular | Least Popular | Most Popular | Least Popular | |
| Any fruit | Oranges | Turnips | Potatoes | No responses |
| Cucumbers | Zucchini | Kohlrabi | Apples | |
| Carrots | Gr. beans | Kale | Oranges | |
| Potatoes | Corn | Bok choy | Bananas | |
| Tomatoes | Apples | Eggplant | All fruit | |
| Onions | Leafy greens | | | |
| | | | | |

What fruits and vegetables do you consistently receive enough of? What would you like to receive more of?

| Would like more of: | Receive enough of: |
|---|--|
| Fruit Peppers Onions Carrots Lettuce Green beans Corn | Many in-season produce is popular initially, but after a few weeks less so Summer squash Cucumbers |

What are the highest demand pantry items?



The providers identified cost, lack of storage, and limited refrigeration and freezer storage as the primary challenges to consistently stocking these high demand items.

Are there parts of the county that you feel are underserved?

- Those living in rural communities with limited access to food pantries
- Lack of hot meal programs outside of Iowa City
- North Liberty
- Individuals with mobility issues
- Mobile home parks
- Older adults living in senior housing
- Individuals without access to transportation
- Those unable to use services closest to them for eligibility reasons

What challenges does your organization face in meeting the need of food recipients?

- Storage for perishable and non-perishable goods
- Access to fresh fruits and vegetables
- Not enough volunteers
- Having enough items that families need (inventory challenges)
- Language barriers, lack of interpreters
- Not enough funding for inventory

What resources would benefit your organization?

- 46% (6 of 13) interpreters/multi-lingual volunteers, identified by the three largest pantries
- 23% (3 of 13) storage
- 0% technical support, a better location, different hours

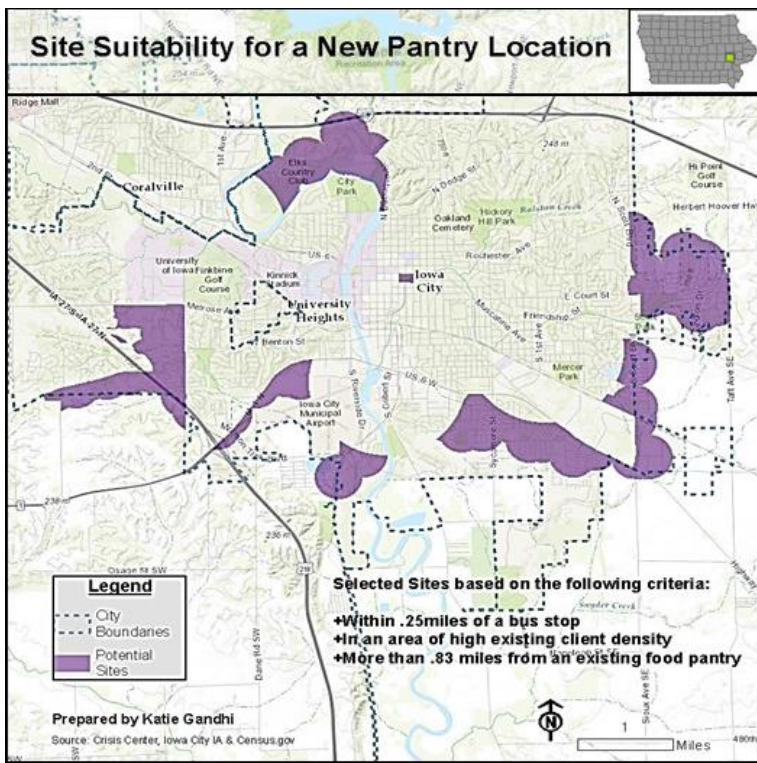
How can Johnson County help more in your organization's efforts?

- Continue the Hunger Task Force, lots of great collaboration and innovative ideas
- Help increase community awareness about hunger
- Assistance with storage
- Help purchase food stock and grants to support our work
- Continued financial support

Spatial Analysis of Food Access in Johnson County

Katie Gandhi, University of Iowa Urban and Regional Planning intern at the Crisis Center utilized data from the Crisis Center, the U.S. Census and the Iowa GIS Data Repository to review food insecurity throughout Johnson County. A site suitability analysis was completed to determine ideal locations for new senior dining, pantry services and the addition of backpack programs.

Since the completion of the spatial analysis in the May 2015, there have been several changes which impact some of the report findings and recommendations. Lone Tree was identified as a suitable location for a new senior dining program however dining services are already being offered in this community and were inadvertently not factored into the study. Several backpack programs were being offered throughout the County at the time of the analysis, however the presence of backpack programs in schools tends to be fluid. These programs are often funded on a short-term basis. The Coralville Ecumenical Food Pantry will have a new, more centrally located home in the spring of 2016 which likely alters the recommendation for site suitability for additional pantry services in Coralville.



The spatial analysis concludes that there are areas of Johnson County that could benefit from additional services. The map above illustrates site suitability for additional pantry services in Iowa City. The areas highlighted in purple have a high client density (greater than 100), is located more than .25 mile from a bus stop and more than .83 miles from an existing food pantry. The researcher established these criteria based on the JCHTF's desire to target new programs and/or facilities in areas of need, including areas that lacked access to transportation and in some cases were not already supported by other services.

The spatial analysis also includes a recommendation for senior dining program in Coralville and additional pantry and senior dining services in North Liberty. The site suitability study recommends the addition of pantry services in the far southwest corner of Johnson County.

Summary of Key Findings

The Access Subcommittee took a comprehensive approach to reviewing food insecurity in Johnson County, interviewing consumers and providers of services, key informants and community members, and the under-served. Additionally, data from a variety of sources including Feeding America, the U.S. Census and the Iowa Department of Education was utilized to substantiate need by target population. A spatial analysis was also conducted to determine geographic need within Johnson County. In analyzing the data from the various populations surveyed there were many common themes regarding needs and barriers.

Barriers to Increasing Food Security

| <u>CONSUMERS</u> | <u>PROVIDERS</u> |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation • Lack of awareness about resources and eligibility requirements • Logistics of carrying heavy groceries when walking or using public transit • Service providers offer limited or no evening and weekend hours • Stigma • Difficulties with completion and approval of SNAP application • Availability of healthy foods • Limited services (food deserts) in rural areas • SNAP not accepted at Farmer's Markets and CSA's • Program restrictions with providers and SNAP for eligibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of dry, cold, freezer storage in Johnson County • Regulations on storage, foods that can be accepted and distributed, eligibility for accepting SNAP (Feeding America, FDA, USDA, OAA) • Limited resources • Limited inventory to meet demand; including protein, non-food items, pet foods, donation of local produce • Lack of participation in summer feeding programs and school breakfast • Lack interpreters • Limited culturally diverse foods (urban pantries) |

The Access Subcommittee noted several key findings from the data collected:

- 81% of pantry visitors are severely housing cost burdened (spending more than 50% of income on housing costs)
- 48% of pantry visitors are not receiving SNAP benefits
- 58% receive half or more of their food from food pantries
- 48% of pantry visitors reported eating less than they wanted on at least one occasion the last 30 days because they did not have enough food
- 21% of pantry visitors reported getting their food from friends or family in the last month
- 31% surveyed were not at the pantry nearest their home;

- 63% of those didn't know about their community pantry
- 15% reported visiting more than one pantry during the last month
 - 50% of those reported not receiving enough food at one pantry
 - 53% of those reported visiting more than one pantry for the variety of items
- Milk, fresh vegetables and fruit, eggs and meat were the most important foods respondents felt pantries should stock
- Providers reported offering little outreach, yet have a high demand for services
- 86% of pantries reported the highest demand items to be meat, and eggs
- 3 of 8 pantries (38%) offer Saturday hours) and 0 pantries are open after 7:00 pm. 6 of 8 pantries (75%) are open at least one evening until between 6:00 – 7:00 pm.
- 100% of the urban pantries reported that their organization would benefit from interpreters
- The three largest pantries in the County identified lack of storage as a barrier to meeting the food needs of recipients
- There are no backpack or food pantry services in the secondary schools
- Dining programs are lacking or non-existent beyond Iowa City (excluding senior dining)
- There is no on-going food delivery service, with the exception of Meals on Wheels, a program for the aging, and a small rural pantry that doesn't promote the service. A major grocery retailer has begun providing delivery service however SNAP isn't a payment option for this service.
- Transportation barriers were noted on every assessment ranging from, no public transportation available in some communities, long distances to a bus stop, limited or no evening/weekend service and in some areas there is no direct bus routes to grocery stores from high density low income areas
- The stigma and fear of being identified were more commonly identified as barriers in the rural areas

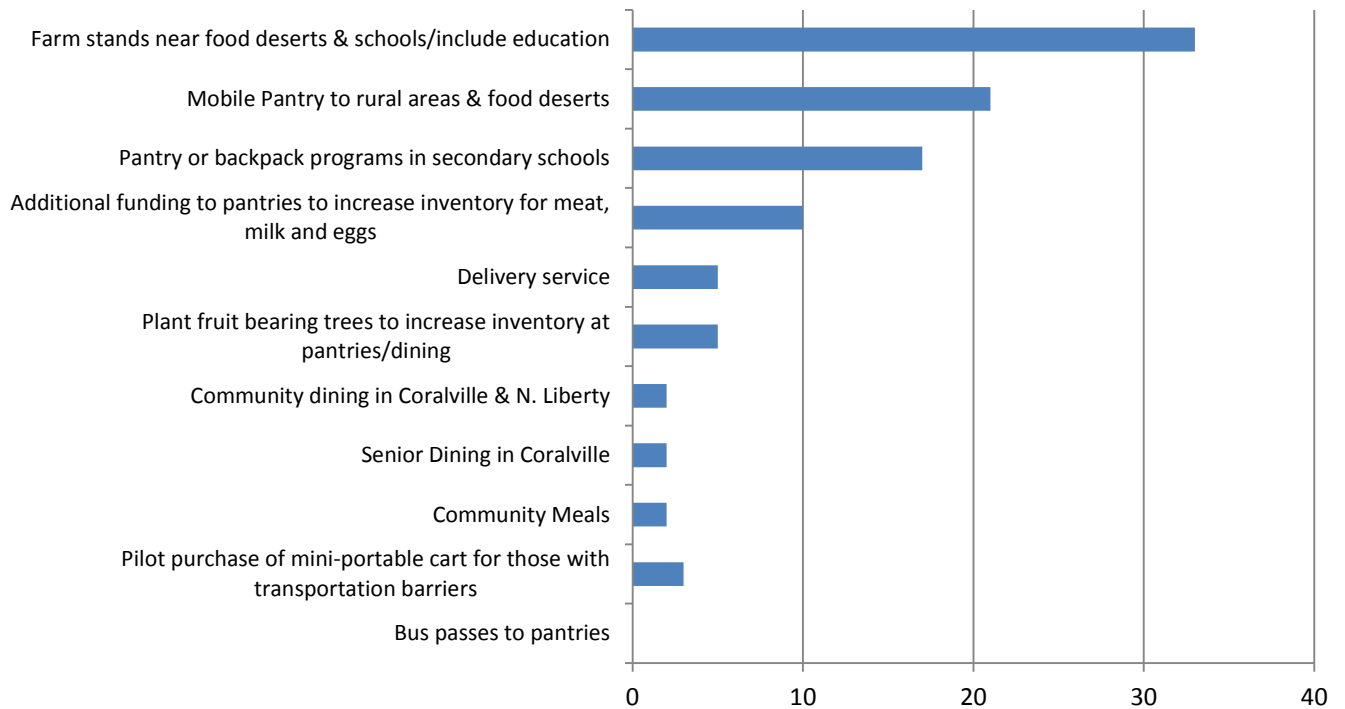
Recommendations

The Access Subcommittee developed a list of solutions to help reduce hunger in Johnson County. The solutions were grouped into three separate categories; services, systemic, and outreach. While some of the solutions consist of new programming opportunities that would require a financial investment, others have no price tag attached and include policy changes, program modifications and focused outreach efforts.

The Hunger Task Force was presented with a comprehensive list of potential solutions along with the rationale for each proposal. (*Solutions and Rationale to Reduce Hunger in Johnson County*, located in the appendix) Those present at the February 8, 2016 JCHTF meeting participated in a priority setting activity to establish the recommendations that would be used to develop an action plan to reduce local hunger. Each JCHTF was provided the opportunity to select their top three solutions within each category. Decisions were based upon data to substantiate the need in addition to likelihood that the solution could be achieved within a reasonable amount of time.

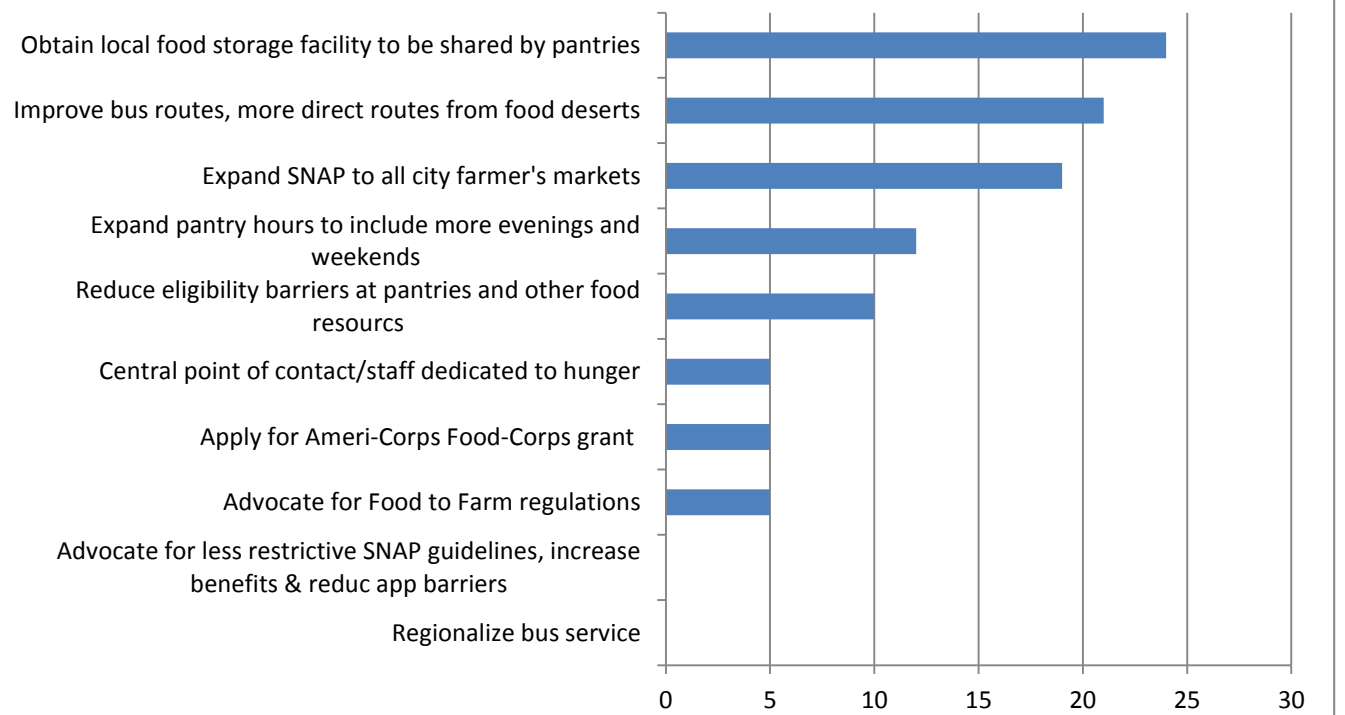
Service Priorities to Reduce Food Insecurity

Based on percent of votes received



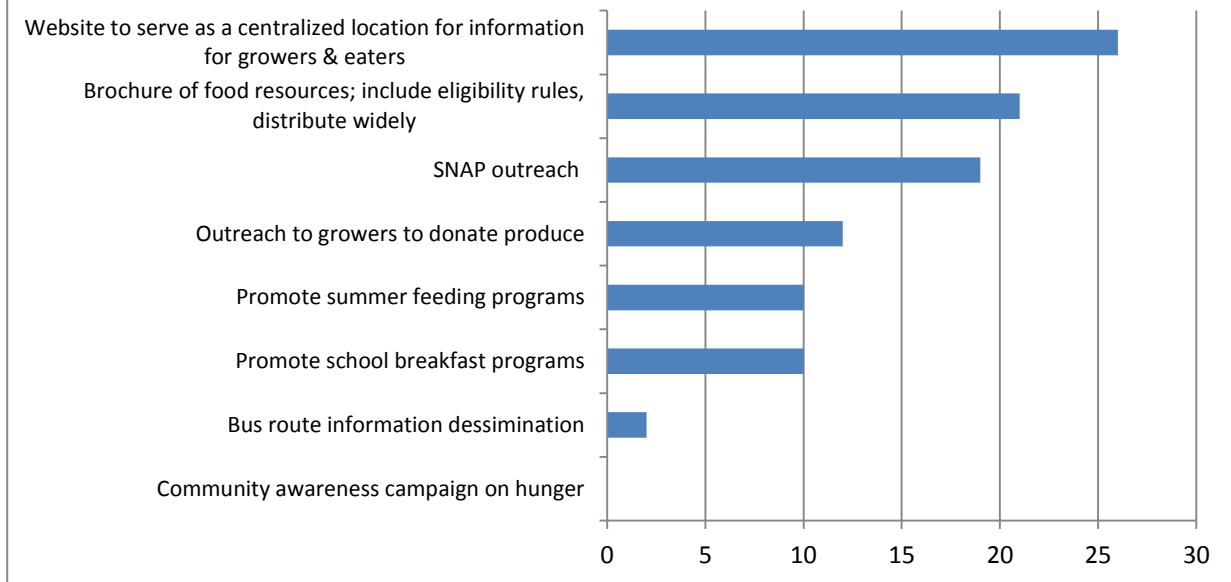
Systemic Priorities to Reduce Food Insecurity

Based on percent of votes



Outreach Priorities to Reduce Hunger

Based on a percent of votes



Recommendations based on identified priorities:

| <u>Services</u> | <u>Systemic</u> | <u>Outreach</u> |
|---|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farm stands near food deserts & schools include an education component (collaborate with Grow Jo Co) 2. Mobile pantry to rural areas and food deserts 3. Pantry/backpack programs to secondary schools | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acquire local storage to be shared by pantries (ideally dry, frozen & refrigeration) 2. Improved bus routes – direct routes to grocery stores from food deserts 3. Expand SNAP acceptance to all city farmer’s markets | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shared website for growers and eaters – centralized location for information 2. Brochure of food resources to include eligibility requirements 3. SNAP outreach |

Roughly 30 solutions to reduce hunger in Johnson County were generated; along with the documented need. The recommended priorities were determined by selecting the top three identified solutions as a starting point with the hope that over time additional solutions/interventions would be initiated by anyone having an interest in addressing hunger.

Hunger is not an issue that can be solved by one entity alone. Feeding America has estimated that an additional \$9.3 million would be needed to address the 18,760 food insecure Johnson County residents. It will take the collective efforts of many including the federal, state, and local government, service providers, food retailers, growers, faith institutions, and the community to rally together to make a difference to reduce hunger in our community.

APPENDIX: A

JOHNSON COUNTY HUNGER TASK FORCE
Solutions and Rationale to Reduce Hunger in Johnson County

1.) SERVICES

| Solution | Rationale |
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| Add pantries or backpack programs to secondary schools | There are no backpack or pantry programs located in the ICCSD secondary schools, yet according to the 2014- 2015 ICCSD Enrollment Report 34% NWJH, 43% SEJH 37% City High and 50% of Tate students are eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch. 20% of the Pantry Survey respondents reported that a Backpack Program would help meet their food needs. |
| Farm stands near food deserts and schools (collaborate with Grow Jo Co. and local farmers) include an education component | Limited or no reliable transportation was identified as a barrier to food resources in nearly every survey and in the interviews. According to the <i>ISU Extension's Poverty and Food Needs for Johnson County</i> , 3.7% of residents lack access to grocery stores. There are several high density, low income neighborhoods just outside of Iowa City or Coralville city limits that lack access to public transportation. Pantry Survey respondents ranked fresh fruits and vegetables as a top choice for pantry food inventory. 17% of the respondents to the Johnson County Health Needs Assessment reported that they "couldn't afford to eat balanced meals". |
| Mobile food pantry to rural areas and food deserts | Pantry respondents identified a mobile pantry as the most beneficial program to help meet food needs (32%). Transportation is frequently cited as a barrier to accessing food resources. Mobile clinics provide access to homebound, elderly, and disabled. According to the Spatial Analysis of Food Access in Johnson County, most of the food deserts are located on the outskirts of Iowa City or outside of city limits and lack access to public transportation. Only 56% of Crisis Center and 46% of Coralville Ecumenical Food Pantry visitors accessed the pantries via their own vehicles according to the pantry survey. |
| Delivery service | 26% of pantry respondents identified delivery service as a beneficial service to help them meet their food needs. Transportation is frequently cited as a barrier to accessing food resources. Delivery service would provide greater access to homebound, elderly and disabled. |
| Community meals | 29% of pantry respondents identified free community meals as a beneficial service to help meet their food needs. More than 150 people attended the Community Meal at ST Morrison Park in September 2015. Community meals are not needs based and thus help to reduce stigma by including the entire community. Stigma has been identified as a barrier for some to access services. |
| Community dining programs in Coralville and North Liberty | The only daily dining programs in the County are located in Iowa City (Free Lunch and Salvation Army). The Free Lunch Program serves approximately 150 meals daily. 10.7% of Coralville and |

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| | 7.7% of North Liberty residents live in poverty. |
| Senior Dining Program in Coralville | Coralville is one of the few Johnson County communities that lacks a senior dining program despite that 7.5% of the population is 65 and over. Senior Dining is currently available in Iowa City, North Liberty, Lone Tree, Solon, and Tiffin. |
| Additional funding to existing pantries to increase inventory, including meat, eggs, and milk | 58% of Pantry Survey respondents reported that they receive half or more of their food from food pantries and 48% reporting eating less than they wanted on at least one occasion in the last 30 days. 15% of Pantry Survey Respondents indicated that they visited more than one pantry in the last 30 days. Of those, 49% indicated they did so because they did not receive enough food at one pantry and 53% wanted a greater variety of items. 71% (5 of 7) of pantries that responded to the survey reported that the budget/maintaining adequate inventory is one of their biggest challenges. Meat, eggs, milk and fresh produce are in highest demand, yet the most costly to stock. When pantry guests were asked what programs or services could best help meet their HH need the most frequent response was more proteins/meats. More variety of foods also ranked high. |
| Increase availability of bus passes for consumers accessing food programs | Transportation has been identified as a barrier in every survey and assessment completed by the Hunger Task Force. 13.4% of Crisis Center and 11.6% of the Coralville Ecumenical Food Pantry survey respondents reported using the bus to access the respective pantries. The Crisis Center distributes five single ride tickets to 79 households each month. The tickets are distributed within the first few days of each month. The Coralville Ecumenical Food Pantry does not provide bus tickets. The City of Coralville transit passes are limited to 20 or 31 day with no single ride option. |
| Pilot the purchase of mini-portable carts for those with transportation barriers | Pantries reported distributing between 20 -34 lbs. of groceries per household per visit with an average of 24.5 lbs. Managing this heavy of a load is challenging for most individuals, but especially for those with mobility issues and dependent on public transit. One individual interviewed said; <i>"I think transportation is a major barrier because food boxes are heavy...cause it's all canned goods, dried goods, you, know, and that stuff's really heavy and so if you're takin the bus, and you have this enormous food box ... it's really hard to get it home."</i> 40.5% of CEFP and 26% of Crisis Center visitors reported accessing services via bus, taxi or walking according to the pantry survey. |
| Identify location and plant fruit bearing trees to increase inventory of fruit at pantries and dining programs | Fresh fruit was listed by pantry survey respondents as one of the top five most important foods for pantries to stock. 57% of the pantry providers identified fresh fruit as one of their highest demand items. According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System only 18.5% of Iowa adults consumed 5 or more fruits and vegetables a day, 26.8% consume less than one vegetable serving a day (CDC) compared to the recommended 2.5 cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruit per day. N. Liberty Community Pantry surveys suggest that only 9-19% of consumers are eating 5+ servings of fruits and vegetables per day. |

2.) Systems

| Solution | Rationale |
|---|--|
| Expand SNAP to all city farmer's markets | Iowa City was just approved to accept SNAP at the Farmer's Market. When cities assume the management responsibilities, barriers for farmers to sell their produce to SNAP recipients are greatly reduced and SNAP beneficiaries have more options to fresh, local produce. This produces a win, win situation with local growers expanding their consumer base and SNAP recipients having access to local fresh foods. Seek grant funding for programs such as Double Up Bucks in order to incentivize the purchase of fresh produce. |
| Obtain local food storage facility (ideally dry, refrigeration and frozen) to be shared by pantries | The three largest food pantries in the County have identified lack of storage as one of their biggest challenges in meeting the needs of food recipients. Table to Table has also reported turning down donations due to having no storage. CEFP and NCLP have volunteers that make weekly trips to the HACAP food reservoir in Hiawatha. The Crisis Center rents a truck monthly at an average cost of \$165/trip. Some pantries are provided limited amounts of food and need to turn food over more quickly. Pallets of food are being taken out of county that could be distributed more quickly. |
| Advocate for less restrictive SNAP guidelines, reduce application barriers, and increase SNAP benefits. | Feeding America has identified that only 41% of households utilizing pantries and dining sites are receiving SNAP benefits yet more than 88% of those households are estimated to be income eligible. Only 52% of the pantry survey respondents reported receiving SNAP benefits and 12% reported they would like assistance applying for SNAP. As part of the regionalization model, DHS no longer provides face to face appointments to assist with applications for assistance leaving consumers to figure it out on their own. Dozens of survey respondents indicated that they are not eligible for or don't receive enough SNAP to meet their food needs. Chronically unemployed, adults without dependents may not be eligible for food assistance as eligibility requires participant to work or be in a work program at least 20 hours per week for more than 3 months in a 36 month period to qualify for SNAP. When asked what programs or services would best help them meet their HH needs, increased SNAP /food assistance was the second most common response followed by increased income. |
| Improve bus routes – direct routes to grocery stores from food deserts | Some survey respondents and observers indicated that using public transportation to access the grocery store was time consuming and challenging, requiring a bus change. |
| Regionalize bus service – bus service in N. Liberty | Transportation has been identified as a barrier on every assessment. Access to NLCP is difficult without transportation. Many of the mobile home parks in or near Iowa City are located in a food desert and not on a public transit route. |
| Expand pantry hours of operation to include evenings and weekends | 8% of the pantry survey respondents that were not visiting their community pantry reported not doing so because the hours did not meet their needs. When survey respondents were asked what else would be helpful to meet their food needs, several reported expanded hours at the pantries. There are no pantries open in Iowa City on the weekend. Evening pantry hours are very limited with 7:00 the latest closing time. |

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| Advocate for fewer regulations for Farm to Food Program | |
| Apply for Ameri-Corps/ Food-Corps grant for added staffing to address hunger | Increase staffing capacity to assist with implementation of solutions and strategies generated by the Hunger Task Force. |
| Reduce eligibility barriers at pantries and other food resources | Some local pantries have residency requirements or ID requirements. 15% of pantry survey respondents reported visiting one than one pantry and 48% who visited more than one pantry said there wasn't enough food at one pantry. Distributing more food per visit may reduce the need to visit more than one pantry. |
| Develop a central point of contact to combat food insecurity. | There are multiple organizations and coalitions working either directly or indirectly to address hunger. Establishment of a central point of contact along with the continuation of a broad reaching coalition (growers, providers, eaters), services will be offered in a more efficient manner while reducing duplications. Responsible for implementation of the action plan developed by the Hunger Task Force. |

3.) Outreach

| Solution | Rationale |
|--|---|
| Community awareness campaign on hunger | Raising awareness about local hunger will help increase the donation of time, money and goods to food serving organizations. An awareness campaign may help reduce the stigma that many identified during key informant interviews, community meetings and pantry surveys, as a barrier to accessing food resources. An awareness campaign could also shed light on the prevalence of hunger while dispelling myths about food insecure populations. In 2012 in Johnson County an estimated 5.7% of households with an income greater than 185% federal poverty (\$44,955 according to 2016 FPG) were food insecure. 81% of pantry survey respondents reported spending more than 50% of their income on housing costs. |
| Website to serve as a centralized location for information for growers and eaters (farmers markets, pantries, dining locations, educational resources) | Centralization of services will help connect growers with eaters and providers feeding the hungry, enhance collaboration, reduce stigma, and serve as a one-stop clearinghouse for the community. Lack of knowledge about various resources and programs and eligibility requirements have been widely documented as a barrier to services. A comprehensive website will help connect food related entities with the community, enhance collaboration and reduce duplication. |
| Brochure of food resources; include eligibility requirements, distribute widely (health, education, business) | 64% of the pantry survey respondents who were not at their community pantry reported that they did not know about it. Many consumers were uncertain about SNAP eligibility and other program eligibility. Likewise many providers and key informants reported lacking information as well. |
| SNAP outreach | Feeding America has identified that only 41% of households visiting pantries and dining sites report receiving SNAP benefits yet more than 88% of those households are estimated to be |

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| | income eligible. Only 52% of the pantry survey respondents reported receiving SNAP benefits and 12% reported they would like assistance applying for SNAP. |
| Outreach campaign to local growers to donate produce (gleaning) | Many growers have excess produce and lack information on donation options. The pantries have a large demand for fresh local produce, but some lack transportation necessary to pick up produce. An outreach campaign would assist in connecting growers with providers. |
| Increase outreach for school breakfast programs | In 2014 the ICCSD had a 14% participation rate in the school breakfast program and CCA, 11%. Nationally, the benchmark is to have a participation rate that mirrors the school's FRL count. |
| Increase outreach for summer feeding programs | Summer feeding sites for kids are lacking, just 9 in 2014, compared to the number of kids eligible for FRL. Some of these sites are not "open" to the public, but rather serve kids enrolled in a specific program. |
| Additional information for consumers on bus routes | Because so many of the food insecure people use public transportation, they need to be aware of which routes stop near pantries and grocery stores that provide the deal for their money. |