

Reducing Food Insecurity in Kent County: Assessing the Progress



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Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Public trust and the credibility of research depend in part, on full disclosure of potential conflicts of interest. In the interest of full disclosure, it is duly noted that Steve Borders, PhD, MSHP is a current board member of Feeding America of West Michigan. He has actively served on the board since 2009 where he serves in a volunteer capacity.

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Executive Summary

In Kent County, community leaders have continued to search for answers to better serve the less fortunate, especially in regards to those suffering from food insecurity. To develop appropriate policy responses to challenging social and economic issues affecting West Michigan, community leaders have sought to better understand the impacts of pervasive food insecurity through ongoing research and evaluation. Among those was an evaluation conducted for the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force (ENTF) in conjunction with the Kent County Health Department authored by Matt Van Gessel, David Medema and Lauren Colyn to study food pantry consumers, identifying barriers that prevent access to affordable and nutritious food (Van Gessel, Medema, & Colyn, 2006). While the Van Gessel et al. study largely focused on the individual or consumer side of transportation demand and barriers to food security, Steve Borders and Katie Lindt complemented that work by addressing transportation, logistical, and distribution barriers of nutritious foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables (Borders & Lindt, 2008). This study is largely a continuation of those earlier efforts, especially in regard to evaluating some of the direct policy responses identified by the two aforementioned studies.

In Kent County, two agencies were the primary focus of the Borders and Lindt study. Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank of West Michigan, now known as Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank (Feeding America of West Michigan) is the primary provider of food stocks to emergency food providers within Kent County and throughout West Michigan. Feeding America of West Michigan is part of the national Feeding America network of food bank members providing help to low-income individuals and families. As West Michigan's leading hunger-relief charity, Feeding America of West Michigan understands its role in providing the food stocks that will be distributed to those in need. Joining Feeding America on the front lines of hunger relief and central to the efforts of relieving food insecurity are the emergency food providers made up of food pantries and soup kitchens. ACCESS of West Michigan, is the largest network of food

pantries in Kent County, representing over 300 congregations working in our community by linking those in need with those that can help.

As primary components of the emergency food system in Kent County, policy responses aimed at Feeding America of West Michigan and ACCESS were made in the 2008 Borders and Lindt study. Today, four of the six study recommendations related to Feeding America of West Michigan were implemented. For example, Feeding America of West Michigan secured funding to begin a delivery system in Kent County by purchasing a refrigerated delivery truck. Through a \$160,000 grant from the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force Fund, ACCESS of West Michigan made a number of capital improvements to build overall system capacity. In response to these initiatives, the primary goal of this research is to evaluate the implementation of the 2008 study recommendations. A secondary, but equally important goal is to continue monitoring the overall emergency food system in Kent County in the face of the continued economic weakness that has placed enormous strains on the network.

Key Findings

Expected increases in service demand have been tempered by increased enrollment in SNAP. Nearly half of emergency food providers reported a decrease (23%) in service demands or that demand remained the same (24%). Among those reporting reductions in service demands, they attribute those reductions to the increase in both the value of SNAP benefits and the number of families/individuals enrolled in SNAP.

About a quarter of emergency food providers reported worries about food supplies but most agencies are able to serve all clients that come to them in need. Twenty-three percent of emergency food providers said that they either “often” or “sometimes” either ran out of or worried about running out of food. Twenty-seven percent either “often” or “sometimes” reduced the amount of food given to clients because of low supplies. Despite these worries, it appears that the majority of

agencies were able to serve clients as 88% of respondents said they “never” had to turn away clients because of a lack of food.

The majority (68%) of respondents indicated that they “seldom” or “never” lacked nutritionally appropriate food items for their clientele. Yet among the local retailers (i.e. Meijer, Spartan, Wal-Mart) that donate food locally in Kent County, over half (56%) said that the food donated from retailers either “often” or “sometimes” contributed to client obesity. This was followed by 40% of respondents that purchased unsalable food from Feeding America of West Michigan and 28% of those receiving donated food from local restaurants.

Emergency food provider ratings of Feeding America of West Michigan in the areas of assortment, quality and nutritional value were mixed. When asked about the assortment of food available at Feeding America of West Michigan, the majority of respondents (49%) reported the assortment as “good”, followed by slightly more than a third of respondents (34%), saying that the assortment was either “poor” or “fair”. Nearly identical proportions of respondents gave similar views of the nutritional content of the food available at Feeding America of West Michigan. When asked about the quality of the food available, respondents were split almost equally into thirds, with 33% saying the quality was “poor” or “fair”, 35% saying the quality was “good” and 32% saying the quality was “very good” or “excellent”.

Donated items to emergency food providers typically do not align with client needs. Agencies most often received frozen canned, dried fruits and vegetables (90%) cereal, pasta and rice (88%), dry and canned beans, eggs, nuts, peanut butter (86%) and snack foods (82%). Among agencies reporting deficits in food stocks, the greatest additional needs were in the areas of essential staples. For example, 93% reported needs for meat, poultry and fish, followed by 89% for fresh fruits and vegetables and 88% for dairy products.

Among Feeding America of West Michigan's service initiatives since the 2008 Borders and Lindt study, the online ordering system has made the greatest impact. Fifty-six percent of respondents indicated that they spend less time traveling to the Comstock Park headquarters since they can now do much of the purchasing for their agency online. Among the other initiatives, such as the bulk processing facility and the free delivery, about 40% of respondents were unfamiliar with the new initiatives.

Most emergency food providers have favorable opinions of ACCESS, but it seems that many of its important services are underutilized by participating agencies. While most agencies working with ACCESS participate in the ACCESS County-Wide Food Drive, many of the other services offered by ACCESS are not well utilized. For example, many agencies rely heavily on volunteers to operate their agencies, yet only 17% percent of survey respondents utilize ACCESS' volunteer recruitment services. In addition, only 35% utilize their food stamp outreach services.

A majority of emergency food providers in the ACCESS network believe there are relatively high numbers of families that are eligible, but not enrolled in the SNAP program. Sixty-seven percent of respondents said that among the families they serve, they believed that at least some of them were eligible for SNAP benefits. About a third (35%) believe that the number of families they serve that are potentially eligible for SNAP benefits is between six and ten families, followed by 23% estimating the number of families at fewer than five. A majority (58%) believe they are not enrolled because they are unfamiliar with how to apply for those benefits.

2008 and 2010 Study Comparisons

The proportion of emergency food providers reporting an increase in demand over the past year was significantly ($p < .05$) lower in 2010 versus 2008. Although more than half (54%) of 2010 emergency food providers said that the number of clients they served had increased over the past year, that was much lower than the 75% of respondents offering these views from the 2008 survey. Among those reporting an increase in clients, the percentage increase was unchanged between 2008 and 2010.

Significantly fewer ($p < .05$) emergency food providers were worried about running out of food in 2010 versus 2008. When asked about running out of food, significantly lower ($p < .05$) proportions of respondents from the 2010 survey period were either ("often" or "sometimes") worried about their food stocks as compared to respondents from the 2008 survey.

Among items that would make emergency food providers more likely to utilize Feeding America of West Michigan, they were virtually unchanged between 2008 and 2010. When asked about services or particular food items that would encourage emergency food providers to make greater utilization of Feeding America of West Michigan none of the differences were statistically different. While often difficult to obtain for Feeding America of West Michigan, emergency food providers continue to request greater quantities of items that are typically in high demand among pantry patrons. For example, about two-thirds of respondents during both survey years said that they would be more likely to use Feeding America of West Michigan if greater quantities of meats, prepackaged and ready for distribution, canned fruits, soup and vegetables (at the shared maintenance price) were more readily available.

Agency participation with ACCESS volunteer recruitment and training activities significantly ($p < .05$) increased between 2008 and 2010. In 2008, 26% of respondents reported utilizing ACCESS to conduct training activities at or for their

respective agency. By 2010, the percentage utilizing ACCESS for training services nearly doubled to 49%. The percentage of agencies utilizing ACCESS services to assist them with their volunteer recruitment was just four percent in 2008. By 2010, 17% of respondents were relying on ACCESS to help them with their volunteer recruitment strategies. Agencies continued to report similarly high levels of participation in ACCESS activities during both survey years in the areas of the Holiday Giving Network, the County Wide Food Drive, and Reporting (their) Pantry Services to the Resource Centers.

Introduction and Background

In Kent County, emergency food is provided by a number of agencies working collaboratively to tackle the problem of hunger in the community. Among those is the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force (ENTF), a group of community leaders working collaboratively at the strategic level to develop and support the management of basic service systems such as food, shelter, utilities and transportation. Established in 1982 by the Kent County Department of Human Services and the Kent County Board of Commissioners, the ENTF helps coordinate hundreds of non-profits, governmental agencies, faith-based organizations, funders and concerned volunteers to help Kent County's most vulnerable citizens obtain the basics needed to be self-sufficient. Food pantries supply the bulk of non-perishable goods and perishable food items to Kent County individuals and families in need.

Most, but not all food pantries, are part of a coordinated network organized by the All County Churches Emergency Support System (ACCESS). ACCESS is a network of over 300 congregations, individuals, and the community at large working together to meet needs in Kent County. ACCESS has operated in the community for over 25 years and helps coordinate religious and secular services. ACCESS also acts as a central conduit through which human needs are matched with the most appropriate congregational or agency resource.

In addition to food pantries, a number of agencies also provide prepared meals to the needy in Kent County. Generally thought of as "soup kitchens", agencies such as these hit the mainstream of U.S. consciousness during the Great Depression. Today, such agencies serving prepared meals do far more than merely serving soup. These agencies provide hot and nutritious meals for the hungry or those that have limited cooking facilities, with many serving breakfast, lunch and dinner 7 days a week.

The agencies that directly serve the needy receive many of their food products from Feeding America of West Michigan, which serves as the area's food bank. Food banks

typically receive donations of unsalable food from corporations and other donors and pass them along to the frontline food kitchens and pantries. Feeding America of West Michigan operates seven warehouses, serving more than 1,200 food pantries, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, domestic violence shelters, rescue missions, and other charity agencies across 40 Michigan counties (the western third of the Lower Peninsula and entire Upper Peninsula) who in turn provide that food aid to approximately 400,000 needy residents of West Michigan each year. In 2009, Feeding America of West Michigan distributed 24.5 million pounds of food and other goods (Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank, 2010).

From Hunger to Food Security

Hunger became a public issue in the late 1960s as Senators Joseph Clark and Robert Kennedy broadcast a documentary called “Hunger in America” (Eisinger, 1998). Early definitions and measurements of hunger varied widely (Radimer, Olson, & Campbell, 1990), resulting in a variety of social programs and policy approaches at the federal level. Those definitions of hunger focused on domains such as: “the physical sensation of hunger”, “going without food or not receiving a complete meal” and “inadequate food” (Physicians' Task Force on Hunger in America, 1985). While the President’s Task Force on Food Assistance found little evidence to suggest that widespread malnutrition was a major health problem in the United States, it called for the need to more accurately define and measure hunger. As a result, narrow definitions of hunger evolved into the broad concept of “food security”. Today, there are at least two hundred different definitions of the term (Smith, Pointing, & Maxwell, 1992). In the United States, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) collects annual data on food security of the nation and defines the term as:

- Access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum:
 - The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.

- Assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies) (Anderson, 1990).

Although the definition of feeding the poor has evolved from addressing hunger to food security, many emergency food providers have struggled to put this definition into practice. There is a general consensus among scientists that certain dietary factors are associated with the prevention of chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer. In light of this consensus, more and more emergency food providers are recognizing this and believe that it is important to provide their clientele with healthy food choices, supporting efforts to prevent disease and reaching better overall health. The majority of food that is donated to food banks and pantries is often due to manufacturing errors or damage from shipping and storage. Products may also be perishable or have limited retail value because they are nearing their expiration date. Ultimately, the food provided to people in need was not only nutritionally deficient in specific areas, but the supplies were generally found to be too little to adequately assist in relieving food insecurity (Teron & Tarasuk, 1999).

Previous Studies

Recently, two studies sought to evaluate the emergency food system in Kent County to improve services to those in need. In 2006, Matthew Van Gessel, David Medema and Lauren Colyn engaged in a study of food pantry consumers and began the process of identifying barriers that prevent access to affordable and nutritious food. The researchers found that while Kent County is well-equipped to meet the food-related needs of the county's residents, numerous barriers remain in getting nutritious food to the most vulnerable and needy. While many of the community's most vulnerable participate in federal programs that aid the poor, the need exceeds the federal response. Only 13% of survey participants reported eating balanced meals throughout the year. Most participants agreed that the higher cost of fresh fruit and vegetables is the primary reason they do not eat a properly balanced diet. In addition, study

respondents reported that suburban supermarkets are not accessible to low-income shoppers. Transportation and time constraints are the major barriers preventing low-income residents of Kent County from shopping in suburban areas. While donations from local farm production help fill some food pantry shelves with fresh fruit and vegetables during the summer months, their distribution is uneven with limited availability (Van Gessel, et al., 2006).

More recently, the 2008 study focusing on barriers to gleaning and transportation in the Kent County emergency food system (Borders & Lindt, 2009) found that 75% of survey respondents reported increased demands on their services over the past year. On average, agencies estimated a 35% rise in demand for assistance. Even in the face of increased demand, 79% of respondents said they “never” had to turn anyone away due to lack of food, yet strains are beginning to show. Forty-five percent said their agency either “often” or “sometimes” reduced the amount of food given to clients due to diminishing supplies. Although food is often available from Feeding America of West Michigan, some study participants lamented about the dearth of nutritious foods at Feeding America of West Michigan. In further unpublished analysis performed by a registered dietitian of several randomly selected 2008 and 2009 weekly food lists from Feeding America of West Michigan found many of the foods nutritionally deficient. The registered dietitian evaluated the weekly food lists from Feeding America of West Michigan to better understand the types, nutritional content and quantities of food available to emergency food providers. The weekly food lists from Feeding America of West Michigan catalog the type and quantity of food and non-food items available to emergency food providers. When compared to the current USDA dietary guidelines, however, the available food fell far short of USDA recommendations. The USDA guidelines represent the best and most current nutritional advice for healthy Americans two years and older. Among the tenets of the dietary guidelines related to the analysis, the following are most relevant:

- Eat a variety of foods to get the energy (calories), protein, vitamins, minerals, and fiber you need for good health.

- Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol to reduce your risk of heart disease and certain types of cancer. Because fat contains more than twice the calories of an equal amount of carbohydrates or protein, a diet low in fat can help you maintain a healthy weight.
- Choose a diet with plenty of vegetables, fruits, and grain products that provide needed vitamins, minerals, fiber, and complex carbohydrates. They are generally lower in fat.
- Use sugars only in moderation. A diet with lots of sugars has too many calories and too few nutrients for most people and can contribute to tooth decay.
- Use salt and other forms of sodium only in moderation to help reduce your risk of high blood pressure (Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, 2006).

The registered dietitian evaluated the weekly food list against the five major food groups recommended for daily consumption by the USDA. The results of one of the three separate analyses of the weekly food lists are available in Table 1. We chose to provide the results of only one of the weekly food lists since the findings were fundamentally consistent across separate analyses of the sampled weekly food lists drawn at different points in time during 2008 and 2009. The five major food groups include: grains (whole-grain cereals, breads, and pasta), vegetables (spinach, carrots, peas, and pinto beans), fruits (fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruit), and milk (low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt), and meat/protein (low-fat or lean meats and poultry, beans, peas, nuts). In evaluating the nutritional values and appropriateness of the available foods as categorized by the USDA food pyramid, the dietitian ranked the food items into one of three categories: 1) fits nutritional guidelines and offers nutrient dense benefits, 2) fits nutritional guidelines or 3) does not fit nutritional guidelines and offers primarily empty calories. Within each food group there are two numbers in parentheses. The number on the left represents the total number of items within the food category that offer little or no nutritional value. The number on the right represents the total number of food items available that week. For example, among

those foods classified as grains, 32 of the 51 food items available from Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank had little or no nutritional value. The Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank weekly food list also contained a plethora of food items that fall outside of the five basic food groups as defined by the USDA. For example, Feeding America of West Michigan has vast quantities of condiments, such as Heinz, Newman's Own and Kraft salad dressings and dipping sauces. In addition, Feeding America of West Michigan has a wide variety of beverages, including iced coffee drinks, Diet Pepsi, Gatorade, Lipton Tea, and Snapple. Items such as these were not included by the registered dietitian's analysis because they did not fit into the five major food groups (Borders, Lindt, & Borders, 2009).

Feeding America of West Michigan does have limited availability of fresh fruits, vegetables, milk and other perishables in their "shopping area". The shopping area contains odd lot items, small donations of fresh fruits and vegetables and/or perishable items with short shelf-lives. Typically, agencies come to Feeding America of West Michigan's physical location to browse the shopping area for these particular items since they are often not advertised on the weekly food lists. Although the foods available in the shopping area appear to better fit nutritional guidelines and offer nutrient dense benefits, the limited quantities of such products reduces the availability of such products for widespread distribution.

Table 1: Nutritional Analysis of Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank Weekly Food List (March 23rd, 2009)

	Grains (32/51)*	Vegetables (0/4)	Fruits (0/14)	Milk (1/2)	Meat/Protein (0/10)
Fits Dietary Guidelines and Offers Nutrient Rich Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Honey Crusted Wheat Bread® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ 100% tomato juice ♦ frozen green peppers ♦ frozen carrots ♦ frozen sliced mushrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ applesauce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Silk soy milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ tuna in water ♦ chicken leg quarters ♦ chicken thigh with backs ♦ scrambled egg patties ♦ vegetarian beans ♦ fried egg white patties
Fits Dietary Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ egg bagels ♦ Yeast dinner roll dough ♦ Cheez -It Snack Crackers® 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ fruit juice 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Hamburger Helper Cheesy Beef Taco Singles®
Empty Calories or Little Nutritional Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Cream cheese filled croissants ♦ Kellogg's Kung Fu Panda Fruit Snacks® ♦ Pecan shortbread cookies ♦ Chocolate butter buns 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ cream cheese 	

* Note: The number on the left represents the total number of items within the food category that offer little or no nutritional value. The number on the right represents the total number of food items available that week.

The Borders and Lindt study made a number of recommendations for improving the local system. Among six of the study's recommendations related to Feeding America of West Michigan, four of those have been implemented. For example, Feeding America of West Michigan secured funding to begin a delivery system in Kent County by purchasing a refrigerated delivery truck. Teresa Pawl-Knapp, Assistant Director of Feeding America of West Michigan has expressed the fact that many pantries are now ordering more food from the food bank because they are not limited by transportation barriers and thus, getting more food to those most in need in our community. In addition, Feeding America of West Michigan constructed a new facility to break down bulk perishables, such as USDA commodities, into individual and family-sized packages for easy distribution. The Borders and Lindt study found a lack of community resources to break down bulk perishables efficiently and safely, especially lean meats, to be a critical barrier in getting more nutritious food to those in need. Today, Feeding America of West Michigan has the first site in the United States among over 200 food banks in the larger Feeding America national network to have such capabilities. Ms. Pawl-Knapp further expressed that officials at the national Feeding America office have taken a keen interest in the bulk processing facility in West Michigan as an idea that may be replicated in other parts of the country. The study also recommended that ACCESS better understand capacity needs within their network of food pantries.

Implementing several of the policy responses to the 2008 study were made possible through the generous assistance of local philanthropists. In the fall of 2009, when it became obvious that the economic situation nationally and locally would have a profound effect on families in Kent County, local philanthropists gathered to determine how to help. The result was a \$2 million fund supported with pledges from the Daniel & Pamella DeVos Foundation, Dick & Betsy DeVos Foundation, Doug and Maria DeVos Foundation, Rich and Helen DeVos Foundation, Dyer-Ives Foundation, Frey Foundation, Grand Rapids Community Foundation, Neighbor to Neighbor Fund (City of Grand Rapids), Nokomis Foundation, Paine Family Foundation, Sebastian Foundation, Slemons Foundation, Steelcase Foundation, VanderWeide Family

Foundation, Wege Foundation, and W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The fund was administered by Grand Rapids Community Foundation. While not all of the \$2 million went to support food-related issues, the fund supported a number of emergency food-related needs.

Kate Luckert Schmid, program director at Grand Rapids Community Foundation said “The two food grants were a result of recent studies which pointed to specific system improvement needs—these dollars will address many of the long-term issues at the food pantries”. In response to these new investments in the Kent County emergency food system coupled with a challenging economic environment, this study seeks to understand how these investments are helping our community’s most vulnerable citizens.

Below is a summary of the recommendations from the Borders and Lindt study with the policy response or intervention to that recommendation:

- ***Recommendation 1:*** Work with Feeding America of West Michigan to not only make deliveries to agencies, but also bring the “shopping” experience to the agencies.
- ***Response:*** Feeding America of West Michigan applied for and received funding to purchase a delivery truck (see Figure 1) to initiate a pilot program to deliver food purchased from Feeding America of West Michigan to emergency food providers in Kent County.
- ***Recommendation 2:*** Develop an online inventory and ordering system to permit agencies to view Feeding America of West Michigan inventory and to order online.
- ***Response:*** Feeding America of West Michigan has developed and implemented an online ordering system, replacing the manual system that required faxing orders by agencies.

- *Recommendation 3:* Break bulk food products down into easily distributable sizes and packaging for families and individuals.
- *Response:* Feeding America of West Michigan constructed a bulk (see Figure 2) processing facility that can safely break down bulk USDA commodities for easy distribution for individual and family consumption.

- *Recommendation 4:* ACCESS of West Michigan should better understand capacity needs within their network of food pantries.
- *Response:* ACCESS engaged in careful analysis of its key pantries, ACCESS identified ten resource center needs (see Figure 3) to enhance capacity to serve the increasing demand for food.

Due to the limited scope of the project and the nature of the investments made by the ACCESS resource centers, we were unable to specifically focus on these initiatives. For example, the North Kent Service Center (NKSC) in Rockford obtained funding through the ENTF Fund to replace a myriad of energy inefficient refrigerators and freezers to purchase and install a single, walk-in freezer. The addition of this walk-in freezer has permitted NKSC to take large donations of lean meats from area hunters. Single capacity building investments like these that serve only specific areas of the county made it impossible to evaluate given the overall research design.

Figure 1: Feeding America of West Michigan Refrigerated Truck for Free Deliveries in Kent County



Figure 2: Construction of the Bulk Processing Facility at Feeding America of West Michigan



Figure 3: New Walk-In Freezer at North Kent Service Center



The Economy and Need for Food Assistance

Although the national, state and local economy is in a nascent, yet fragile recovery, the most recent recession continues to exact a toll across the country. A recent report by the Pew Research Center on Social and Demographic Trends Project found that more than half (55%) of all adults in the labor force say that since the recession began, they have suffered a spell of unemployment, a cut in pay, a reduction in hours or have become involuntary part-time workers (Taylor et al., 2010). The recession has been particularly difficult for Michigan, with the loss of tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs. Even prior to the recession that impacted the entire country, Michigan and many neighboring states had already lost millions of manufacturing jobs. The Brookings Institute estimates that some 3 million manufacturing jobs were lost between 2000 and 2005 in seven Great Lakes states; Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Michigan was among the most affected by the loss of manufacturing jobs, losing over 218,000 manufacturing jobs over that time period (Friedhoff & Wial, 2006). More recently, Michigan lost 230,000 jobs alone in 2010, the largest recorded drop in the Michigan work force in 53 years of published data (Degroat, 2010).

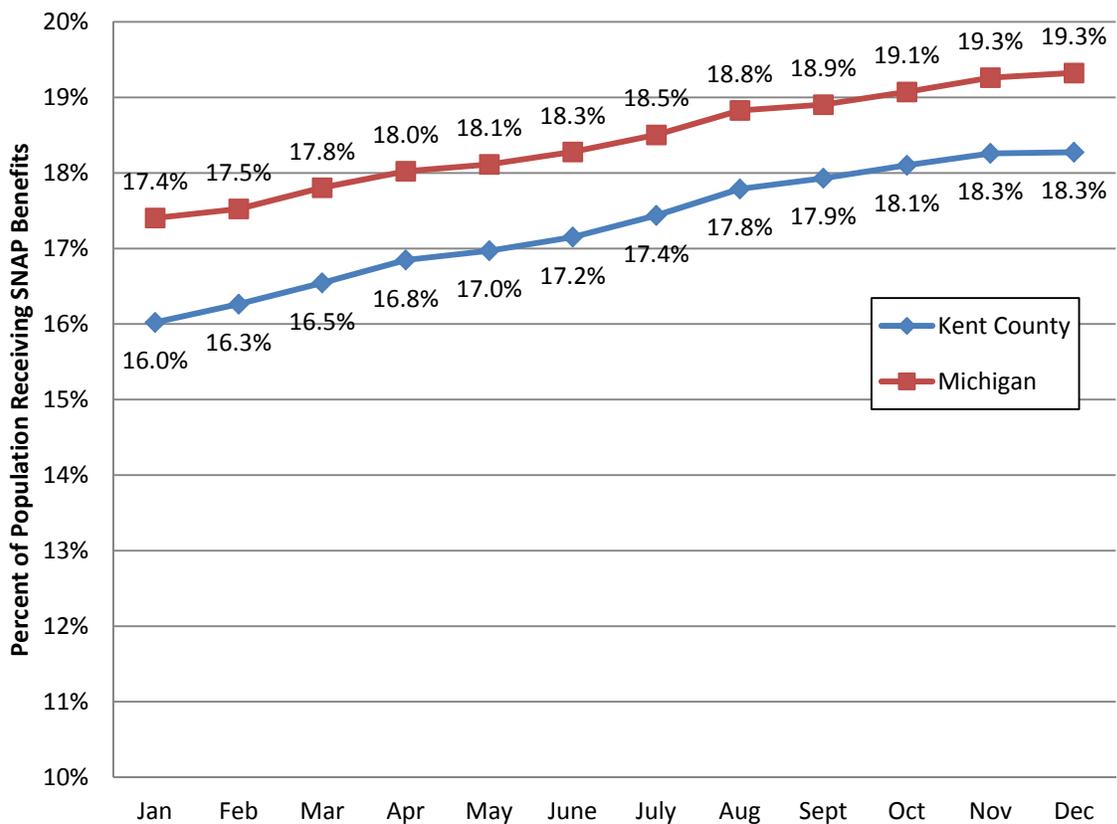
Michigan continues to suffer from one the highest unemployment rates in the nation, although it is down considerably from its December 2009 peak of nearly 15%. The national unemployment rate peaked at just above 10% in July of 2009. As of December, 2010, the Michigan unemployment rate (11.7%) remains well above the national rate (9.4%). Locally, the unemployment rate for the Grand Rapids - Wyoming Metropolitan Statistical Area receded below the national average to 8.9%, down from 12.3% a year earlier (Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2011).

As the economic strains have continued, the proportion of the population in Michigan and Kent County relying on SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program has continued to grow. The Food Stamp Program was created in the 1930s during the throes of the Great Depression to

encourage domestic production of agriculture products. The Act creating the Food Stamp Program was also developed to encourage domestic consumption of U.S. agricultural products through the purchase of surplus agricultural products for distribution to needy families and school lunch programs. The original intent, however, was not to provide relief to the hungry, but to primarily to support the prices of agricultural goods (MacDonald, 1977). Today, the Food Stamp Program or SNAP provides benefits to over 44 million Americans. Most recipients are provided with electronic benefits they can use like cash at many grocery stores. SNAP is now viewed as the cornerstone of the federal food assistance program (Food and Nutrition Service - US Department of Agriculture, 2009). To be eligible for SNAP benefits, monthly gross income of most households must be 130% or less of the federal poverty guidelines. In the federal fiscal year 2011 (October 1st 2010 through September 30, 2011), that equals about \$29,725 per year for a family of four. In addition, households may have no more than \$2,000 in liquid assets, such as a bank account (Department of Health and Human Services, 2011).

Figure 4 represents the estimated percentage of the population receiving SNAP benefits in Michigan and Kent County over the past year. Between January 2010 and December 2010, the percentage of the population receiving SNAP benefits rose considerably. Today, nearly 1 in 5 or 1.9 million Michiganders is receiving SNAP benefits. Locally in Kent County, over 110,000 or just over 18% of the population is receiving SNAP benefits (Michigan Department of Human Services, 2010).

Figure 4: Percentage of Population Receiving SNAP Benefits in Michigan and Kent County - 2010



In April of 2009, an estimated \$58.5 billion of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds were provided to increase benefits and provide additional administrative funds to states to help serve the growing number of families seeking assistance. The Act provides a 13.6% increase in monthly SNAP benefits which is roughly \$80 for the typical family each month. The increase in the monthly allotment in SNAP benefits should benefit both the SNAP participants and the grocery stores and markets where they shop. Ninety-seven percent of SNAP benefits are redeemed at grocery stores and farmers markets within 30 days, resulting in an economic stimulus and helping low-

income families purchase food (Food and Nutrition Service - US Department of Agriculture, 2009).

Despite the increase in SNAP benefits, research shows that food stamps are not sufficient for low-income populations to purchase adequate stocks of foods that are recommended as part of a healthy diet. Program benefits are based on average prices set by the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP). TFP is based on the National Academy of Sciences' Recommended Dietary Allowances and on food choices of low-income households. The TFP specifies the type and quantity of foods that people could consume at home to obtain a nutritious diet at a minimal cost. Critics argue that the monthly SNAP benefit allocations are often far below that actual amount needed to purchase those foods (Jetter & Cassady, 2006). When local prices exceed the value of the TFP, the purchasing power of those using SNAP benefits is eroded, adding increasing difficulty on those trying to purchase foods recommended as part of a healthy diet (United States Department of Agriculture, 2007).

Food Aid and the Local Safety Net

The USDA said the number of households struggling to buy enough food in 2008 jumped 31% from the previous year (Kilman & Thurow, 2009, November 18). This led to an increase in the use of food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens. One in eight people turned to food banks, pantries, and soup kitchens in 2009 and 37 million Americans utilized the services of the national Feeding America network of food banks, such as Feeding America of West Michigan. Higher unemployment and poverty rates continue to push more clients to rely on the services that local food pantries, soup kitchens, and food banks provide (Kilman, 2010, February 2).

With demand growing, some food banks, pantries, and soups kitchens are reducing meal portions and in the worst cases, turning people away because of they do not have the capacity to serve all of those in need (Kilman, 2010, February 2). Ninety percent of food banks claim that unemployment is the leading factor for an increase demand although there are a number of factors that have contributed to an increase

demand. The following are among many of the sobering statistics associated with the recent national increases in hunger relief (Kilman & Thurow, 2009, November 18):

- 46% more people used a hunger relief charity at least once in 2009 than in 2005;
- 13.9 million children were served by an emergency feeding center in 2009 compared to 9.23 million in 2005;
- 76% of adults who used a pantry in 2009 were unemployed;
- 30% overall increase in 2009 from 2008 of those who used a food bank, pantry, or soup kitchen;
- 49 million Americans are found to be food insecure, a 36% increase;
- 17 million reported some degree of food insecurity in 2008, up from 13 million in 2007;
- 74% of households were below the poverty line, the national average income was \$17,162 for a family of three in 2008;
- In 2008, 15% of households reported having trouble putting enough food on the table to feed their families; up 11% from 2007. A total of 49 million people including 17 million children;
- 6.7 million households in 2008 has very low food security, up 43% from 4.7 million households in 2007; and
- 74% of food pantries, 65% of food kitchens, and 54% of shelters have indicated they have had an increase in demand for their service.

Study Results

Overview

There are a host of challenges emergency food providers have and are continuing to face, such as increased demand, high unemployment, and difficulties finding nutritionally appropriate items at low-cost for those in need. In response to several needs and recommendations made in the 2008 Borders and Lindt study, this study seeks to evaluate the initiatives funded by the ENTF Fund at the Community Foundation. In addition, this research also serves to provide continuous and ongoing feedback to the providers of emergency food services in Kent County so that those caring for our most vulnerable populations can continue to improve upon the good work they do in our community. To that end, the survey instrument was designed to elicit responses from emergency food providers in the following areas:

- General trends in service demand over the past year;
- The types and availability of food items from donated and purchased sources;
- Food stock needs among emergency food providers, especially for items with high nutritional value, such as fresh fruits and vegetables;
- Knowledge of and impact of many of the new Feeding America of West Michigan initiatives;
- Food stamp outreach; and
- Participation within the ACCESS network and programs.

In addition, we also repeated a number of the same questions in the 2010 as the 2008 study so that we could provide relative comparisons about overall needs among emergency food providers to better understand the landscape in which emergency food providers, Feeding America of West Michigan and ACCESS are operating.

The survey was developed with the assistance and input of the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force Food (ENTF) and ACCESS. The survey was evaluated by the ENTF Food Subcommittee. After the ENTF reviewed the survey, it resulted in a few minor changes to the survey instrument in order to help clarify several questions to elicit better information from survey respondents. For a copy of the survey instrument, please see Appendix A.

We wanted to gather the data in the most efficient way possible and due to the complexity of the survey design (multiple skip patterns); we determined that using a computer-based approach to the data gathering was the most appropriate method. Using an internet-based survey approach necessitated contact information for the sample, most preferably email. Thus, we collected email addresses for each agency deemed appropriate for the research. The email addresses were unavailable for a number of agencies and we spent a good deal of time calling individual agencies to 1) determine the appropriateness of their inclusion in the research project and 2) if appropriate, record their email information.

We began with a combined list of around 300 agencies within Kent County that were included in the 2008 sample. In addition, ACCESS provided a list of member agencies. The original sample was merged with the updated contact information from ACCESS and publicly available records when possible. This resulted in a sample of 206 agencies for which we had some form of contact information and assumed they were providing emergency food services in some capacity. To effectively communicate with all 206 agencies emails, postcards and phone calls were used. This allowed us to communicate with all agencies and did not limit us to those who only have an email address or permanent address. For example, there are many pantries located in churches that do not have an email address, but we were able ask for their participation in the study via a postcard or phone call, directing them to an internet link for the survey. Between bad email addresses and postcards returned by the US Post Office as undeliverable, we ended up with a sample of 160 providers.

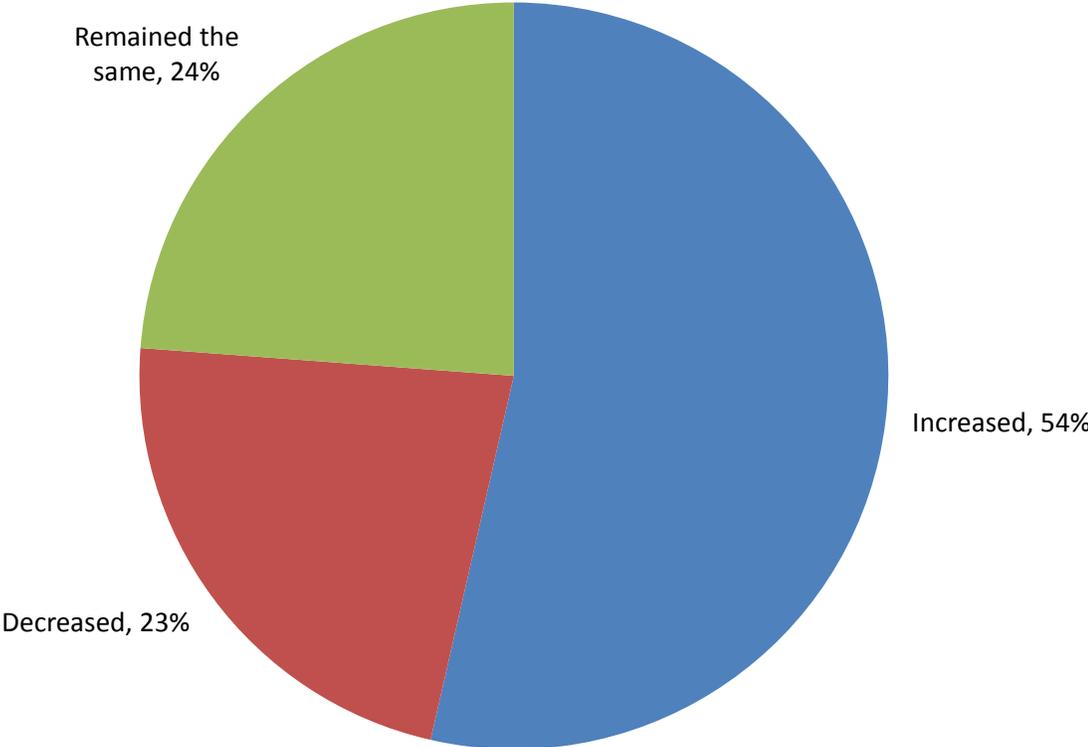
The data collection began in June of 2010 and ended in late-August. Each agency received an email and/or postcard with a link to the survey which was available via the internet and a brief introduction explaining the purpose of the research. We did a number of things to boost participation rates. First, ACCESS sent out an email to each of its member food pantries encouraging them to participate in the study. However, not all of the agencies included in the research belong to the ACCESS network, so not all agencies received this email. To further boost participation, we also sent out two follow-up email reminders and postcards to those who did not have an email address, approximately 10 days after the initial email or postcard invitation was sent to participate in the study. In addition, Gordie Moeller, a local food security advocate and former member of the ENTF made a number of phone calls and visits to emergency food providers he works with to encourage their participation. Overall, we received 74 complete responses to the survey and an additional 33 partially completed surveys that were nearly complete, and thus determined as usable. Thus, the overall participation rate for the survey (100% completed and usable surveys) was 46.2%, which is within norms of similar types of internet based surveys (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000).

Agency Characteristics and Demands

The majority of the emergency food providers responding to the survey operate as a food pantry. Sixty-nine percent of the emergency food providers responding said that they functioned as a food pantry, providing three to five-day food packages to individuals or families. Other respondents operated as soup kitchens. The range of the amount of food provided to families was quite diverse, with one pantry saying they provided only 10 pounds of food per month to the largest indicating they distribute over 60,000 pounds of food in a given month. The median number of pounds of food provided by emergency food providers each month was 2,000 pounds. The typical food pantry serves 10 or fewer clients on the days in which it is open. Among emergency food providers providing prepared meals, they provided anywhere between 156 to over 400,000 each month.

We asked emergency food providers about their recent demands. The clear majority of emergency food providers reported increased demands for their services. Among emergency food providers reporting an increase in service demand, they reported a 54% increase over the past year.

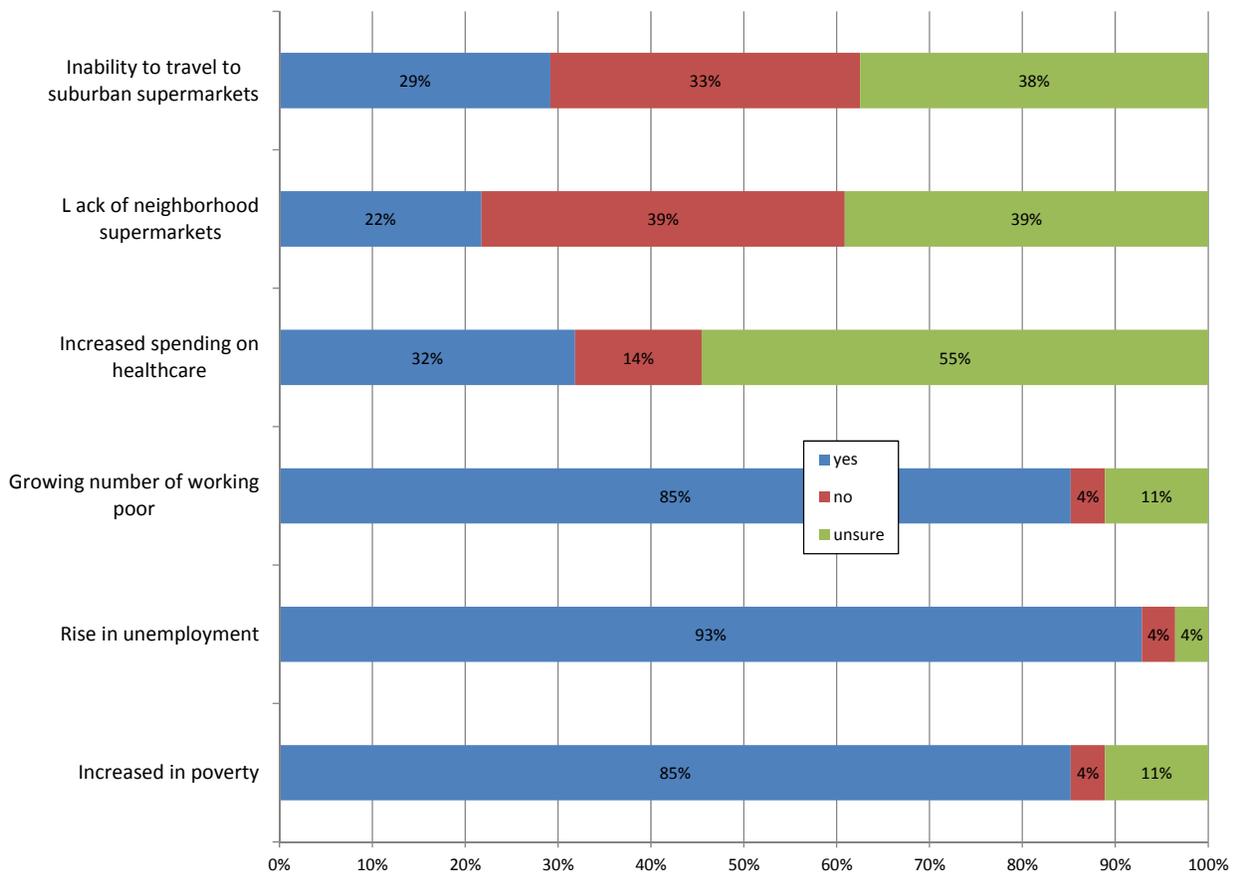
Figure 5: During the Past Year, Has the Number of Clients You Serve?



Among emergency food providers that reported increased demand in services, we inquired about the reasons for the increase in demand (see Figure 6). The majority of emergency food providers reporting an increase in demand attributed it to an increase in the growing number of the working poor (90%), a rise in unemployment (95%), and an increase in poverty (87%). We also inquired about agency perceptions of their clients' ability to shop at lower cost supermarkets, such as Meijer and Wal-

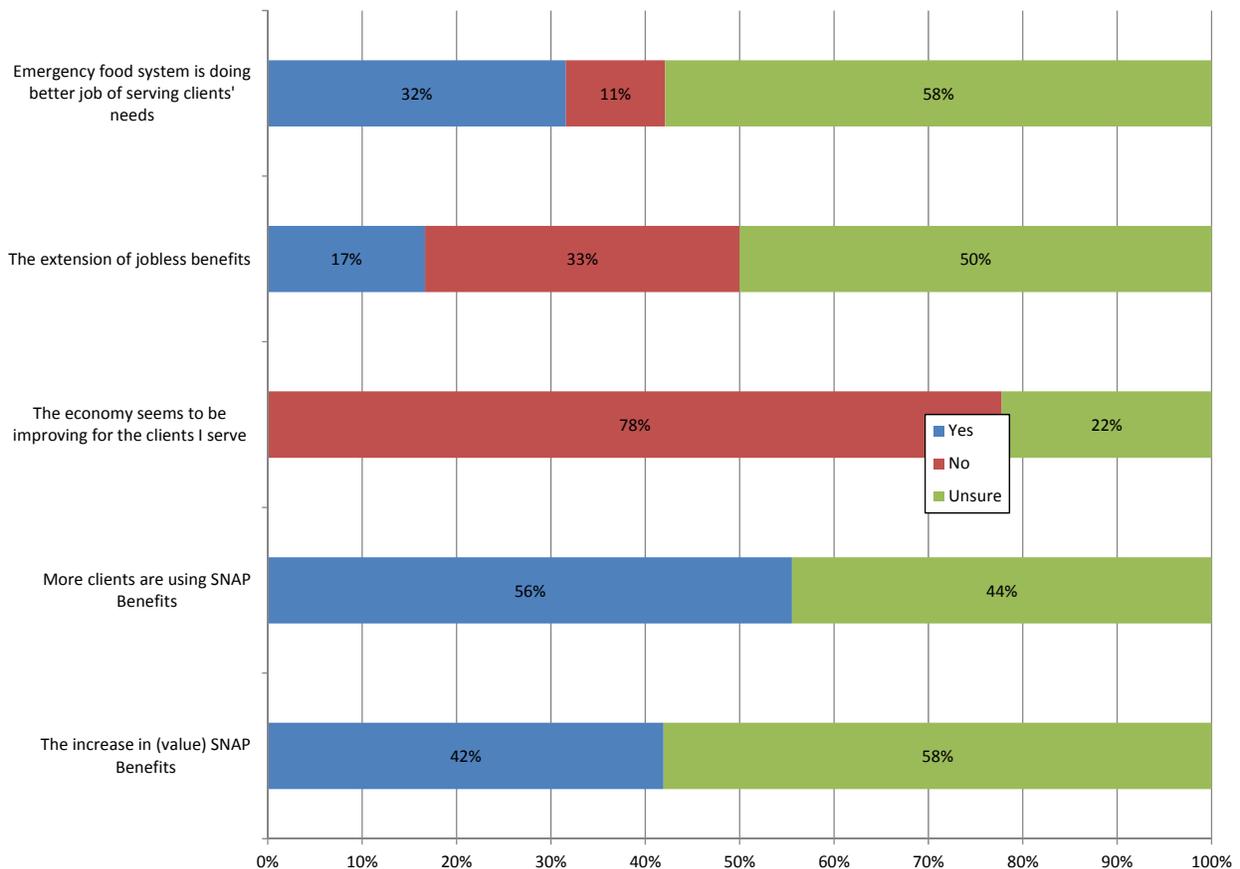
Mart. Lower cost supermarkets are typically located in suburban areas and in particular, the absence of nutritious and low-cost availability of food in inner-city Grand Rapids has been of particular concern. As a result, increasing access to healthy foods in targeted Grand Rapids neighborhood corner stores is the next step in the Project FIT program, a Michigan State University College of Human Medicine childhood obesity prevention program funded through a \$1 million grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. Project FIT is helping families in the Buchanan, Campus, Cesar E. Chavez and Dickinson elementary school districts increase their access to nutritional foods through a new FIT Store program that enables the neighborhood stores to offer healthy food selections. Despite this fact, about a quarter of respondents cited either the lack (22%) or the inability to travel (29%) as a reason for the increased demands.

Figure 6: Which of the Following Reasons Are Responsible for the Increase In Demand at Your Agency?



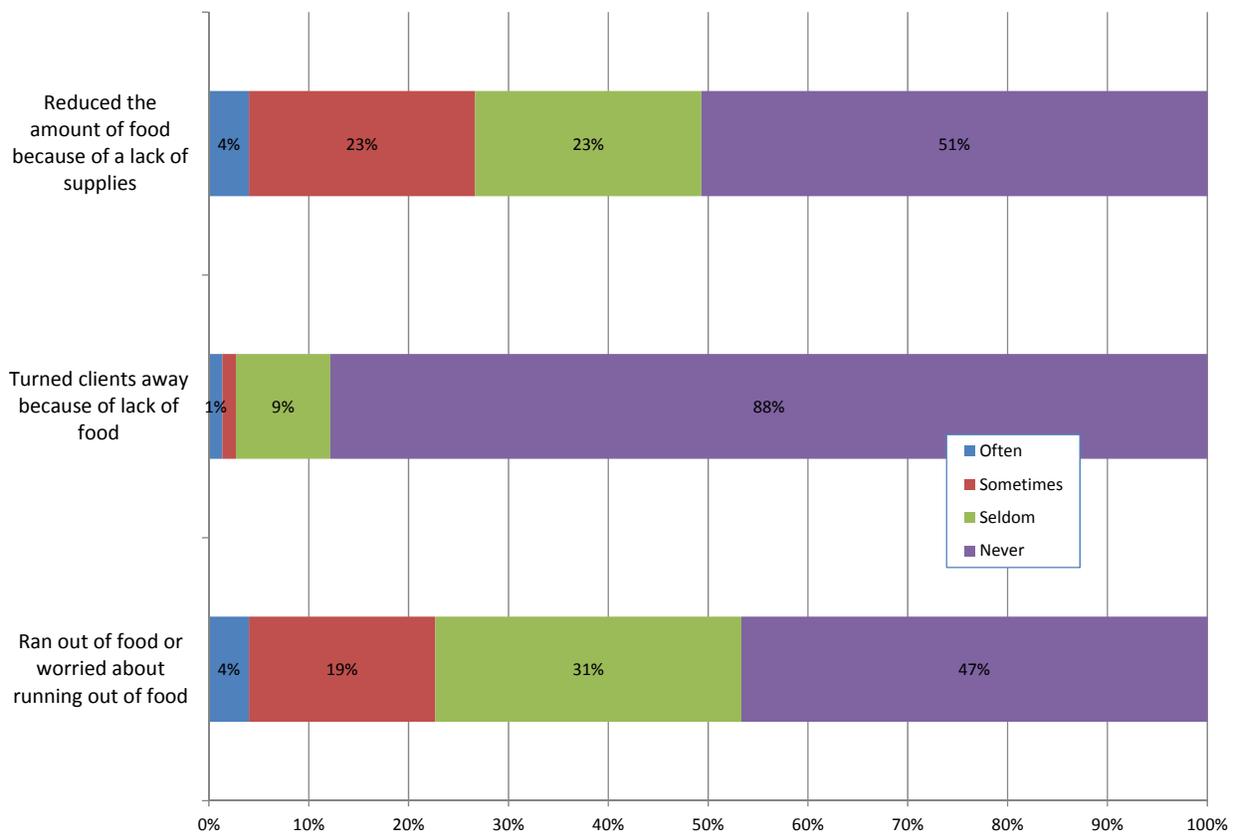
Among the 23% of respondents reporting a decrease in demand over the past year, we inquired about the reasons they attributed to the decline. Despite the fact that the majority of respondents were “unsure” about the impacts of recent policy and program initiatives at the local and national level, those with an opinion attribute the decrease in demand to SNAP. Fifty-six percent indicated that the reduction in demand was due to the fact that “more clients are using SNAP benefits in Kent County”, followed by 42% who said it was the result of the 13.6% increase in the maximum allotment of SNAP benefits made possible through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. In addition, over three-quarters (78%) of respondents rejected the notion that the reduction in service demand was due to the improving local economy.

Figure 7: Which of the Following Reasons Are Responsible for the Decrease In Demand at Your Agency?



To gauge how emergency food providers are coping during the challenging economic environment, we asked about their food supplies during the past year and their agency’s ability to deliver emergency food services. About a quarter of respondents (27%) said they either “often” or “sometimes” reduced or limited the amount of food they gave out because of a lack of supplies. A slightly lower proportion of respondents (23%) reported frequent concerns (“often” or “sometimes”) due to running out of food. Despite these worries, it appears that the majority of emergency food providers were able to serve clients as 84% of respondents said they “never” had to turn away clients because of a lack of food.

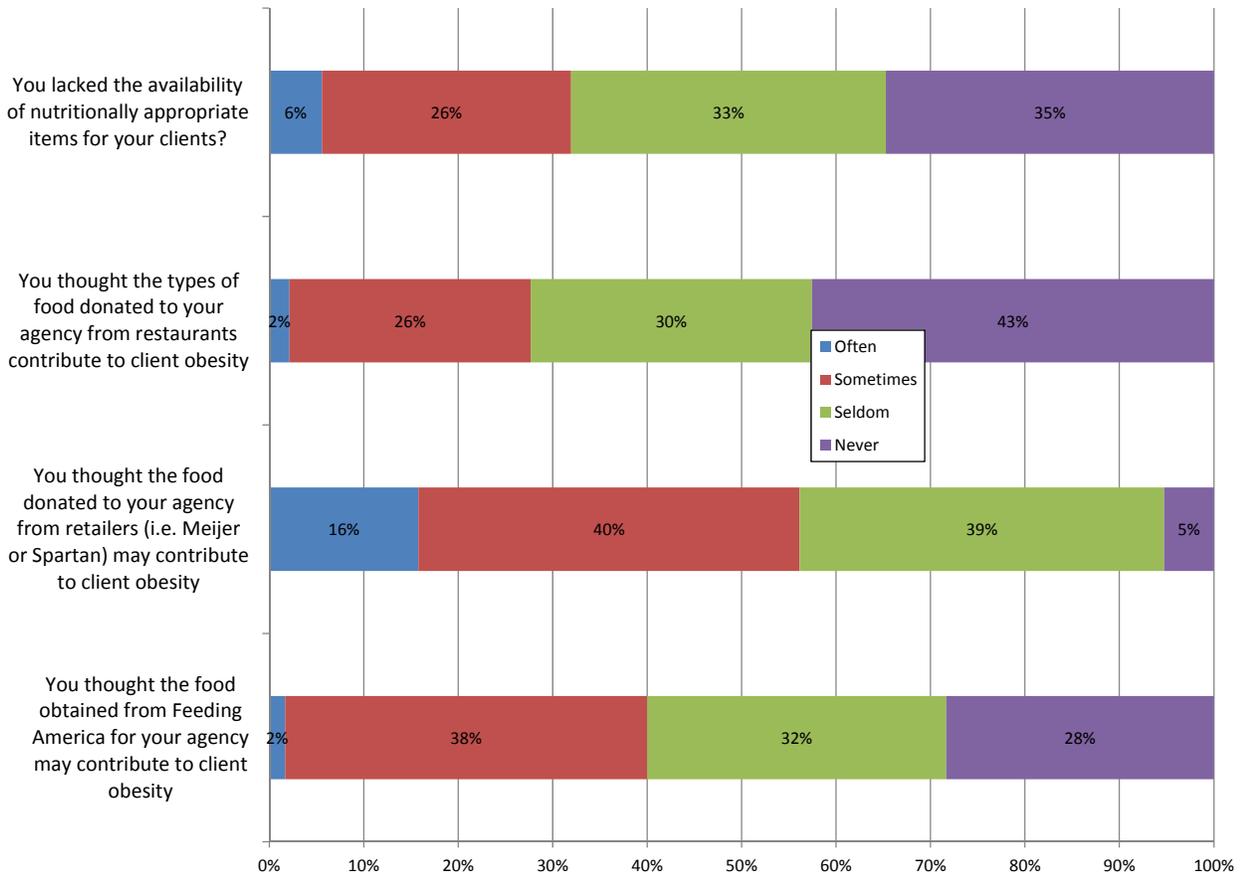
Figure 8: In Considering Your Agency’s Food Supplies during the Past Year, How Would You Respond to Each of the Following?



Today, more and more hunger and food security advocates understand the importance of a balanced diet. There is a general consensus among scientists that certain dietary factors are associated with the prevention of chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer. In light of this consensus, more and more emergency food providers are recognizing this and believe that it is important to provide clients with healthy food choices that support their efforts to prevent disease and attain optimum health. In particular, obesity has become one of the nation's greatest public health challenges. Paradoxically, the epidemic of obesity appears to be especially problematic among low socioeconomic groups which are most likely to access emergency food services. Today, the highest rates of obesity occur among populations with the highest poverty rates and lowest educational attainment. Researchers have linked poverty and food insecurity with lower food expenditures. Because fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats and other nutrient dense foods are more expensive than high sugar and energy-dense processed foods, low-income households are more likely to have lower-quality diets, resulting in higher rates of obesity (Drewnowski & Specter, 2004).

To better understand how emergency food providers are prepared to distribute and service healthier options to their clientele, we asked a series of questions about their views of the nutritional content of the foods they provide and whether or not the donated foods they receive are contributing to the obesity epidemic in our communities. On balance, a clear majority (68%) of respondents indicated that they "seldom" or "never" lacked nutritionally appropriate food items for their clientele. Yet among the local retailers (i.e. Meijer, Spartan, Wal-Mart) that donate food locally in Kent County, over half (56%) said that the food donated from retailers either "often" or "sometimes" contributed to client obesity. This was followed by 40% of respondents that purchased unsalable food from Feeding America of West Michigan and 28% of those receiving donated food from local restaurants (see Figure 9).

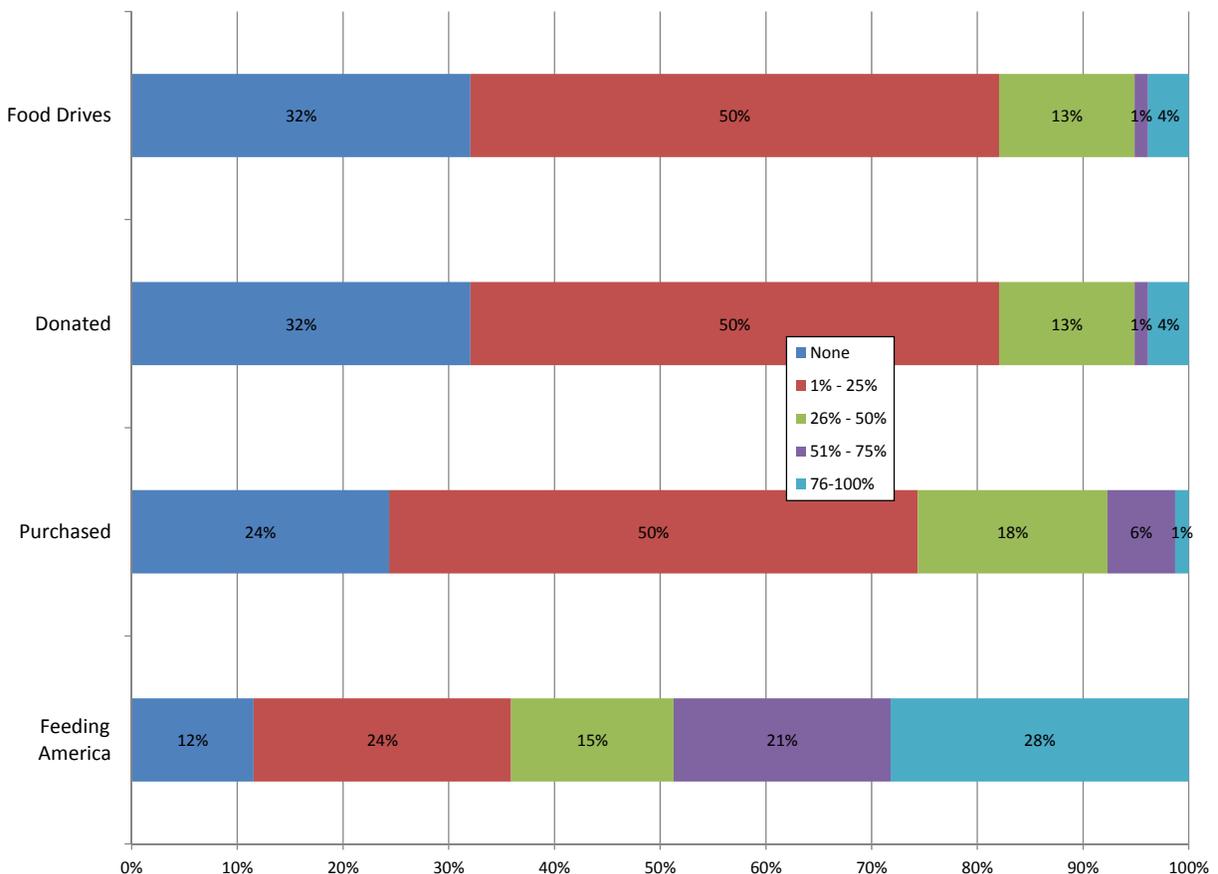
Figure 9: In Considering Your Agency's Food Supplies during the Past Year, How Would You Respond to Each of the Following Questions?



Food Stocks

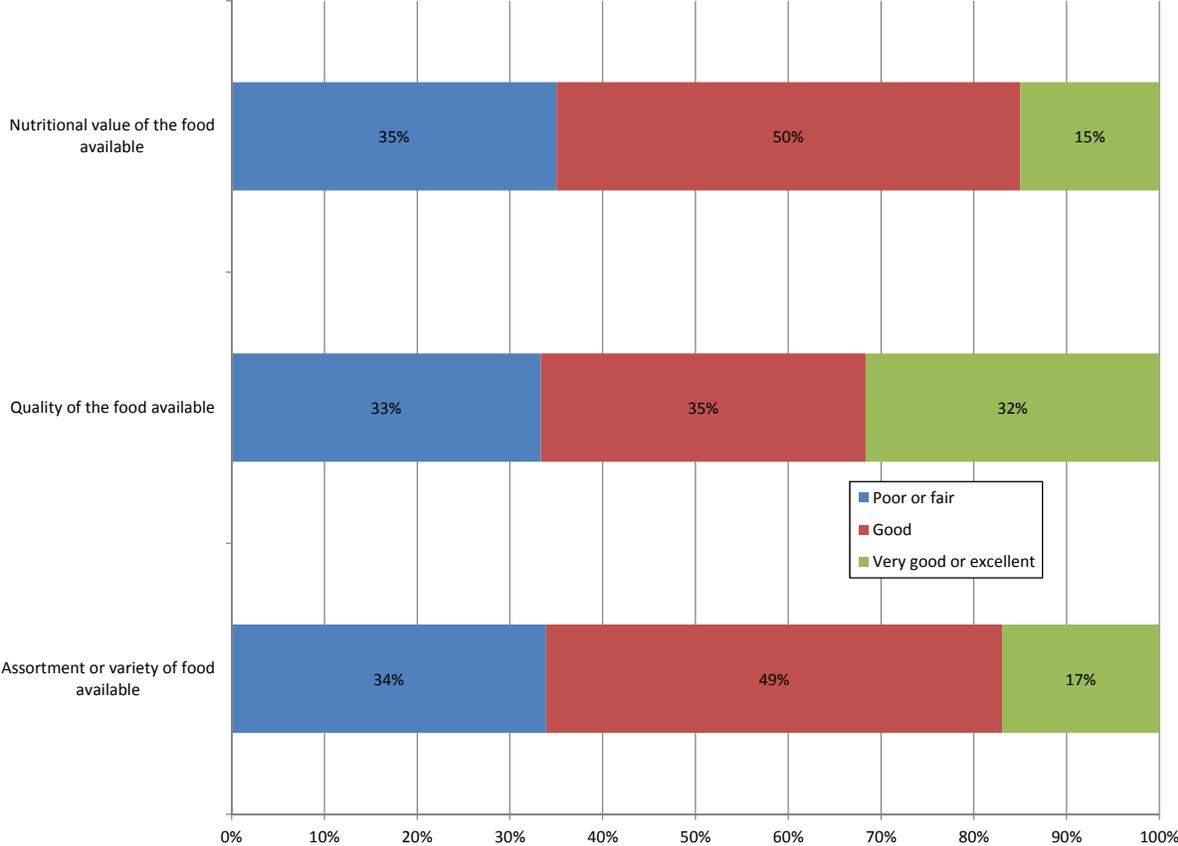
Agencies receive food from various sources. Many emergency food providers responding to the survey reported that Feeding America of West Michigan provides the bulk of their food. Forty-nine percent of emergency food providers indicated that they received 51 - 100% of their food from Feeding America of West Michigan. Those that do not utilize Feeding America of West Michigan for their food supplies utilize a variety of sources, such as relying on food drives, donations from a retailer or manufacturer or purchasing the food on their own at market prices (i.e. from a local grocery or retailer such as Meijer or Wal-Mart). Among emergency food providers not fully utilizing Feeding America of West Michigan, these agencies typically gathered between 1 - 25% of their food stocks from other sources.

Figure 10: Approximately What Percentage of the Food You Provide to Your Clients is collected from the Following Sources?



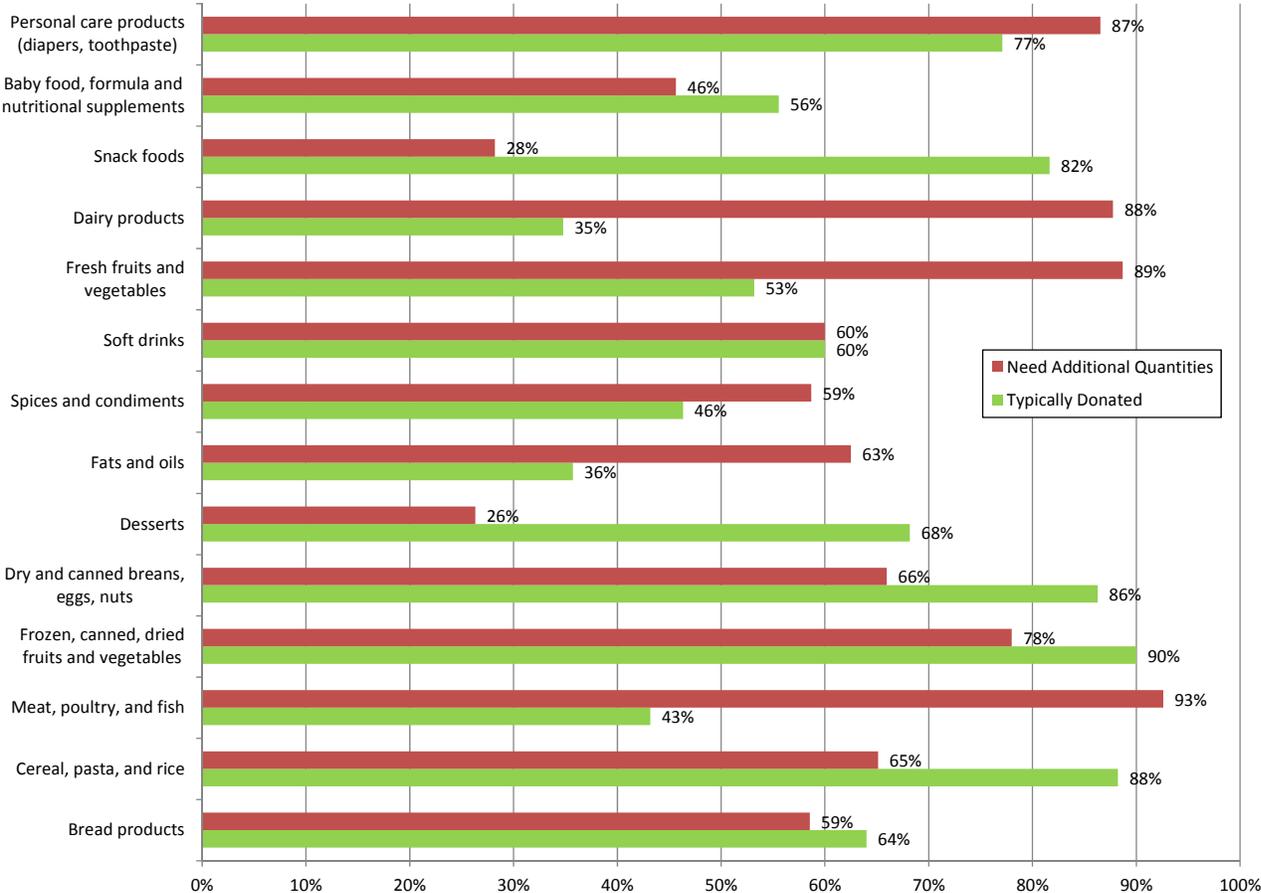
Among the 60 emergency food providers that obtained at least some of their food stocks from Feeding America of West Michigan, we asked respondents to provide perceptions about their experiences when purchasing food from Feeding America of West Michigan. We inquired about three key areas: assortment, quality and nutritional value. When asked about the assortment of food available at Feeding America of West Michigan, the majority of respondents (49%) reported the assortment as “good”, followed by slightly more than a third of respondents (34%), saying that the assortment was either “poor” or “fair”. Nearly identical proportions of respondents gave similar views of the nutritional content of the food available at Feeding America of West Michigan. When asked about the quality of the food available, respondents were split almost equally into thirds, with 33% saying the quality was “poor” or “fair”, 35% saying the quality was “good” and 32% saying the quality was “very good” or “excellent”.

Figure 11: Please Provider Your Experiences with Purchasing Food and Other Products from Feeding America of West Michigan



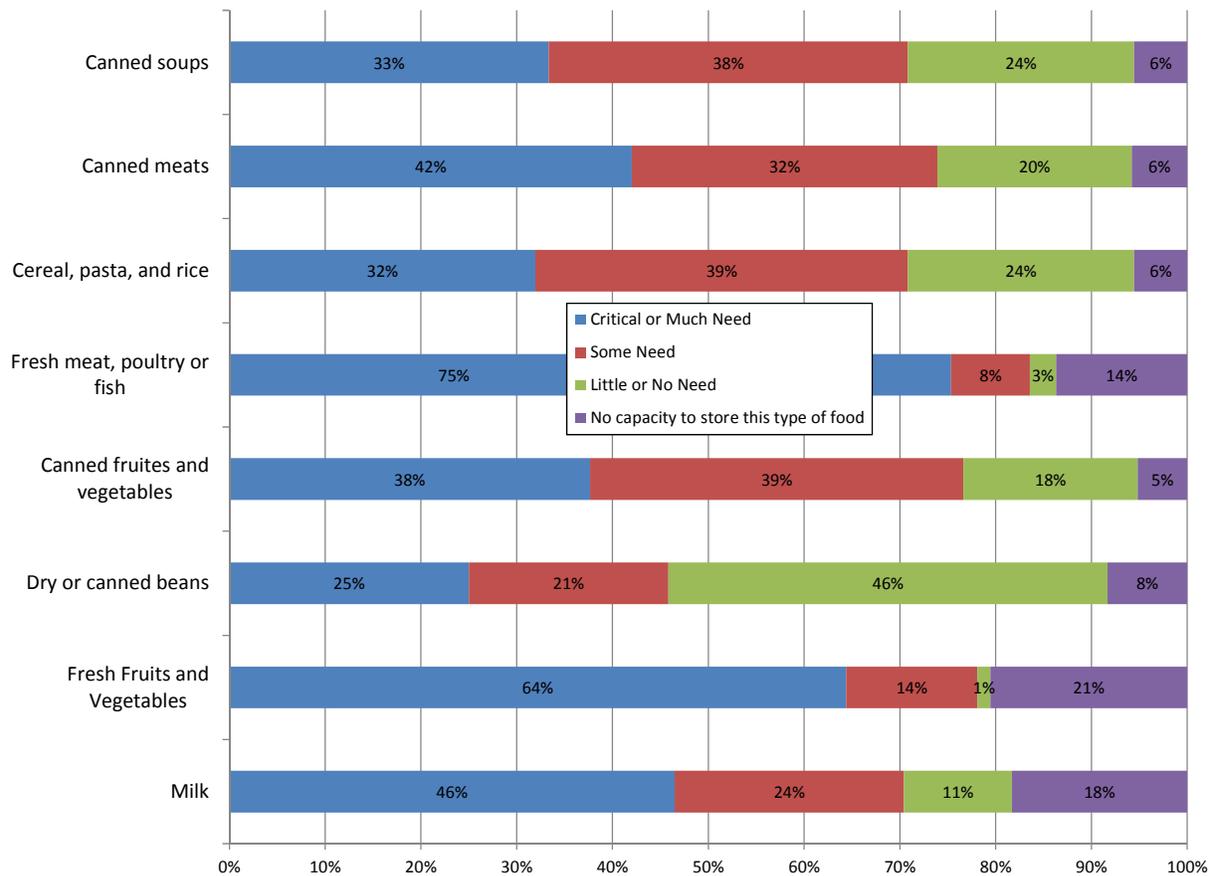
Because donations make up a big part of the food that many emergency food providers receive, we inquired about the types of food agencies receive each month and additional product needs. Agencies most often received frozen canned, dried fruits and vegetables (90%) cereal, pasta and rice (88%), dry and canned beans, eggs, nuts, peanut butter (86%) and snack foods (82%). Among agencies reporting deficits in food stocks, the greatest additional needs were in the areas of essential staples. For example, 93% reported needs for meat, poultry and fish, followed by 89% for fresh fruits and vegetables and 88% for dairy products.

Figure 12: What Types of Foods/Products Are Typically Donated to Your Agency (Green Bar) and What Types of Foods/Products Could Your Agency Use Additional Quantities (Red Bar)?



To better evaluate agency food stock needs, we further inquired about needs for essential staples and nutritious foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables and meats. Despite the generous donations from retailers, restaurants and food drives and the availability of low-cost unsalable foods for purchase from Feeding America of West Michigan, significant proportions of emergency food providers reported needs (“critical”/“much need”) for several food items. The highest needs were reported in the area of fresh meat, poultry and fish (75%), fresh fruits and vegetables (64%), milk (46%) and canned meats (42%). Despite the needs among a majority of emergency food providers responding to the survey in these areas, sizeable proportions of the agencies reported no capacity to store perishable products, such as milk (18%), fresh fruits and vegetables (21%) and fresh meat, poultry or fish (14%).

Figure 13: How Would You Rate Your Agency’s Need for the Following Items?



Service and Product Improvements

As discussed earlier in the Introduction and Background section (beginning on page 7), a number of philanthropic organizations made generous contributions to the ENTF Fund at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation in 2008 as the deep recession placed severe strains on the safety net services in Kent County. Feeding America of West Michigan and ACCESS of West Michigan were among several beneficiaries of the ENTF Funds. Due to the limited scope of the project and the types of capital improvements, only those by Feeding America of West Michigan are evaluated in this project.

We inquired about the specific initiatives that Feeding America of West Michigan engaged after the 2008 study and with the benefit of the grant funds made available through the ENTF Fund. It must also be noted that while the ENTF Fund helped to make many of these initiatives possible, Feeding America of West Michigan applied its own funds to fully cover the costs of these initiatives. We asked two questions related to the Feeding America of West Michigan's investment in the new refrigerated delivery truck: 1) Have your transportation costs been reduced as a result of the free deliveries made by Feeding America of West Michigan and 2) Is your agency able to distribute more food because of the free delivery services? These are important questions because during the 2008 study, many emergency food providers reported difficulties obtaining large quantities of food from Feeding America of West Michigan because of inadequate transportation. For example, many emergency food providers use volunteers to drive to the Feeding America of West Michigan headquarters in Comstock Park to pick up their food orders. Many volunteers and emergency food providers lack appropriate vehicles for delivering large quantities of food. As a result, they may have to make multiple trips to Feeding America of West Michigan from their respective agencies or limit the amount of food they can order and purchase because of an inability to transport it to their food pantry or kitchen. Despite transportation being identified as a key barrier to more efficient distribution of food stocks, only a fraction of the Kent County emergency food providers appear to be benefiting from the free delivery services offered from Feeding America of West

Michigan. Only 12% of respondents said that the delivery services had reduced their transportation costs and only 15% said they were able to distribute more food as a result of the initiative (see Figure 15). Perhaps more telling is the fact that only 43% of respondents had any prior knowledge that the service existed. The free delivery services were, however, primarily designed to cater to high volume emergency food providers.

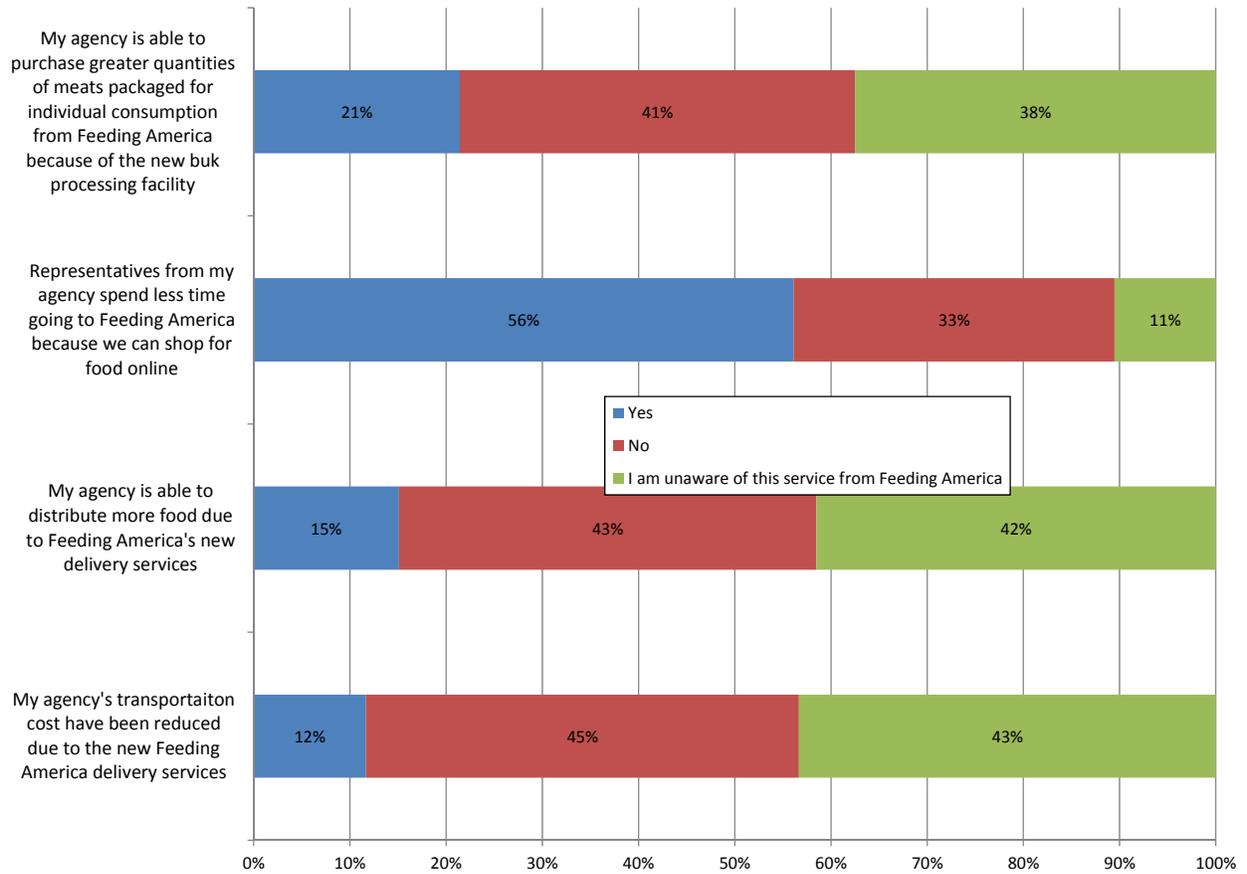
The online ordering system seems to have been the most effective in terms of having a beneficial impact for the majority of emergency food providers responding to the survey. Prior to the 2008 study, all ordering was completed manually. Feeding America of West Michigan distributed a weekly food list via email or fax machine to local agencies purchasing food stocks. In addition, the weekly food lists were also made available on the Feeding America of West Michigan website. Emergency food providers placing orders did so by calling Feeding America of West Michigan, faxing their order or by physically visiting the Feeding America of West Michigan headquarters in Comstock Park (see Figure 14 for a sample of the old paper ordering system). Many respondents to the 2008 survey lamented about the need to physically shop at Feeding America of West Michigan headquarters several times a week to obtain their food stocks. The online ordering system seems to be a tremendous success in that respect as 56% of respondents indicated that they spend less time traveling to the Comstock Park headquarters since they can now do much of the purchasing for their agency online.

The bulk processing facility was a policy response from Feeding America of West Michigan to better handle bulk-sized commodities, such as those frequently received from the USDA. Many food pantries exist in church basements and are staffed by volunteers. They do not have the expertise, proper licensing or facilities to break down larger volumes of bulk foods that are easily distributable to agency patrons. Bulk meats are particularly problematic for many emergency food providers as well as “restaurant sized” cans of fruits and vegetables. The USDA makes commodities available to low-income populations through the Emergency Food Assistance Program

(TEFAP). The amount of food is made available depending on the state's low-income and unemployed population. State agencies work out details of administration and distribution (Food and Nutrition Service - US Department of Agriculture, 2011). In Michigan, the program is administered by the Michigan Department of Education. The Food Bank Council of Michigan contracts with the Michigan Department of Education to distribute approximately 8 million pounds of USDA commodity items to member food banks each year. Examples of commodity items available through the USDA are: beef stew, peanut butter, turkey, potatoes, juice, rice, pasta and canned or fresh fruit and vegetables (Food Bank Council of Michigan, 2011). In addition, the Food Bank Council has made bulk USDA commodities available to Feeding America of West Michigan, such as 40 pound boxes of frozen chicken. Bulk-sized commodities are typically more appropriate for emergency food providers with large kitchens, developing prepared meals for their clientele. The Food Bank Council of Michigan orders commodities for the entire state of Michigan and although the USDA makes individually packaged commodities available to each state, it is not clear why bulk commodities seem to be frequently ordered and available to Michigan food banks, such as Feeding America of West Michigan. Because of Feeding America of West Michigan's new ability to safely repackage bulk commodities, Feeding America of West Michigan does, on occasion receive other Michigan food banks' allotment of bulk USDA commodities because of they do not have a similar bulk processing facility. In addition to USDA commodities, Feeding America of West Michigan does receive bulk-sized donations from retailers and other producers.

Despite the investment in the bulk processing facility, only 21% of respondents (see Figure 15) said they were able to purchase additional quantities of meats, appropriately packaged for individual consumption from Feeding America of West Michigan. Nearly twice the number (41%) disagreed with the notion that they were able to purchase and distribute greater quantities of meats while a similarly high proportion (38%) had no knowledge of Feeding America of West Michigan's new bulk processing facility.

Figure 15: Please State Your Agreement with the Following Questions



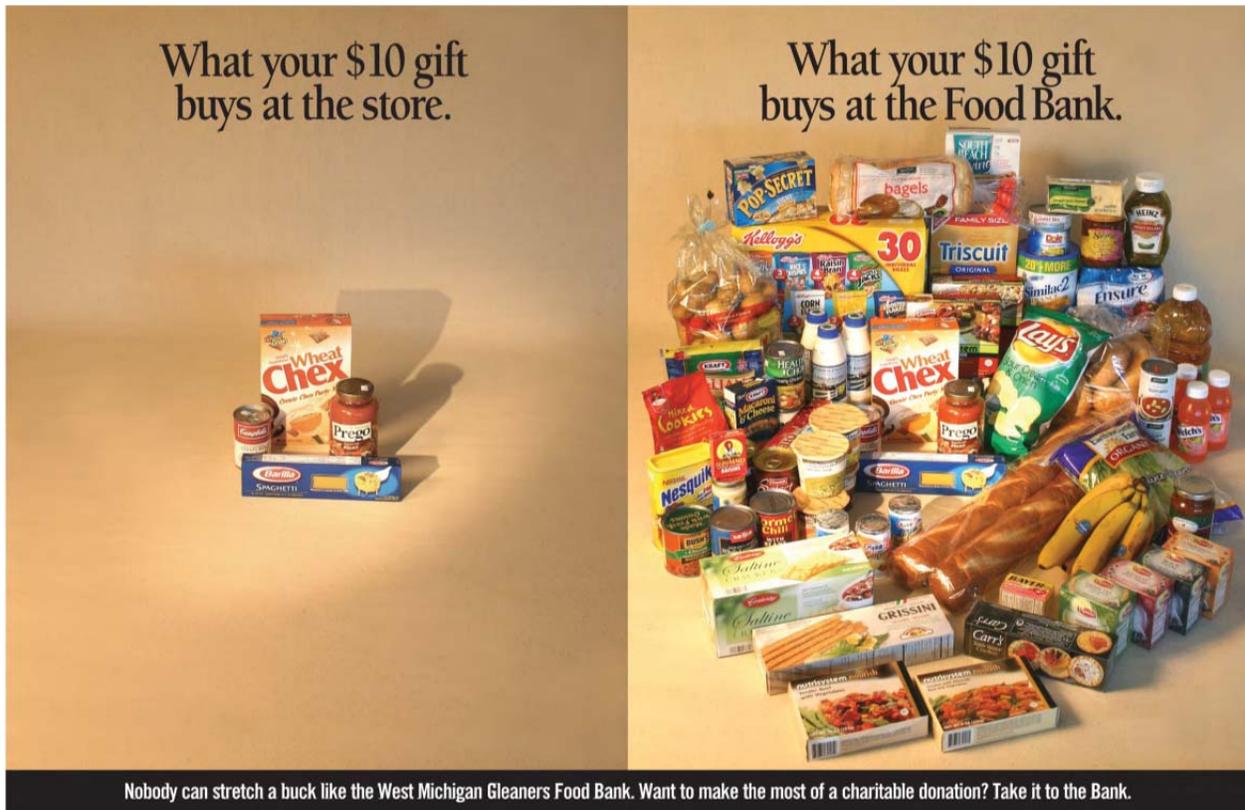
Making Greater Utilization of Feeding America

Food banks, such as Feeding America of West Michigan have been touted by many experts as an efficient method to addressing the issue of hunger on a wider scale. In her 1998 book *Sweet Charity*, Janet Poppendieck noted the steadfast commitment and sophisticated organization of the 50,000 private programs feeding those with food insecurity in the United States (Poppendieck, 1998). While praising their efforts and noting that these programs were filling a void left by the federal government, she explored the costs and consequences of these efforts. For all of the logistical acumen associated in completing a successful food drive, Poppendieck ultimately questioned their utility and effectiveness in addressing hunger. For example, Poppendieck noted that food drives require extensive resources to plan, promote, collect, recruit volunteers and then distribute the foods. The foods are often purchased by individuals at retail prices. Further, when canned and other goods collected at a local food drive are donated to an agency like Feeding America of West Michigan, they require further resources to check each individually donated item against food recall and other Food and Drug Administration warning lists to ensure their safety for consumption.

As a result, many food banks have appealed more for cash donations rather actual donations from individuals. Food banks, such as Feeding America of West Michigan, can buy food at wholesale prices or may receive large or bulk donations from a company when a brand logo changes. Cash donations allow Feeding America of West Michigan to purchase goods at wholesale prices or to offset the logistical costs in transporting donated goods from all parts of the country to the warehouse in Comstock Park. John Arnold, Executive Director of Feeding America of West Michigan of West Michigan, developed an effective promotional item to educate the public and has spoken across the nation on this particular issue. As shown in Figure 16, the left portion of the figure displays how much \$10 of food purchased at a traditional retail outlet and donated to Feeding America of West Michigan amounts to

versus what a cash donation (right portion of the figure) made directly to Feeding America of West Michigan of West Michigan could theoretically buy.

Figure 16: Promotional Flyer from Feeding America of West Michigan to Encourage Cash Donations over Food Donations



Despite the many benefits of using Feeding America of West Michigan, many emergency food providers remain reluctant to source more of their food stocks from Feeding America of West Michigan. Among respondents that utilize Feeding America of West Michigan in some capacity, we asked about the reasons that might make them more likely to make greater use of Feeding America of West Michigan. We repeated a number of the same questions from the 2008 study as well as adding several additional questions.

Among the new questions, we specifically focused on Feeding America of West Michigan's pilot Purchased Product Program. In response to agency needs, Feeding America of West Michigan began a program in 2008 to purchase frequently requested food items, such as 16 ounce cans of soup, canned fruit and other staples appropriately sized for individual or family consumption for easy distribution. These products, however, are purchased by Feeding America of West Michigan, not donated. Thus, the cost of these goods is much higher for emergency food providers than for goods that are donated. For example, Feeding America of West Michigan charges a "shared maintenance" fee for all goods. The shared maintenance fee is applied by the pound and is approximately 16 cents a pound. Thus, a 16 ounce can of pears donated to Feeding America of West Michigan can be obtained by an agency for only the shared maintenance fee. However, if the 16 ounce can of pears is purchased by Feeding America of West Michigan (because of lack of donations), emergency food providers can purchase the can of pears at the same price paid by Feeding America of West Michigan plus the shared maintenance expense. The result is that a donated can of pears could be purchased from Feeding America of West Michigan for around 16 cents while the same can of pears obtained through the Feeding America of West Michigan Purchased Product Program would cost 70 cents (54 cents purchase price + 16 cents shared maintenance fee). Although the costs of the purchased foods are considerably higher than donated foods, these items are often below average retail prices.

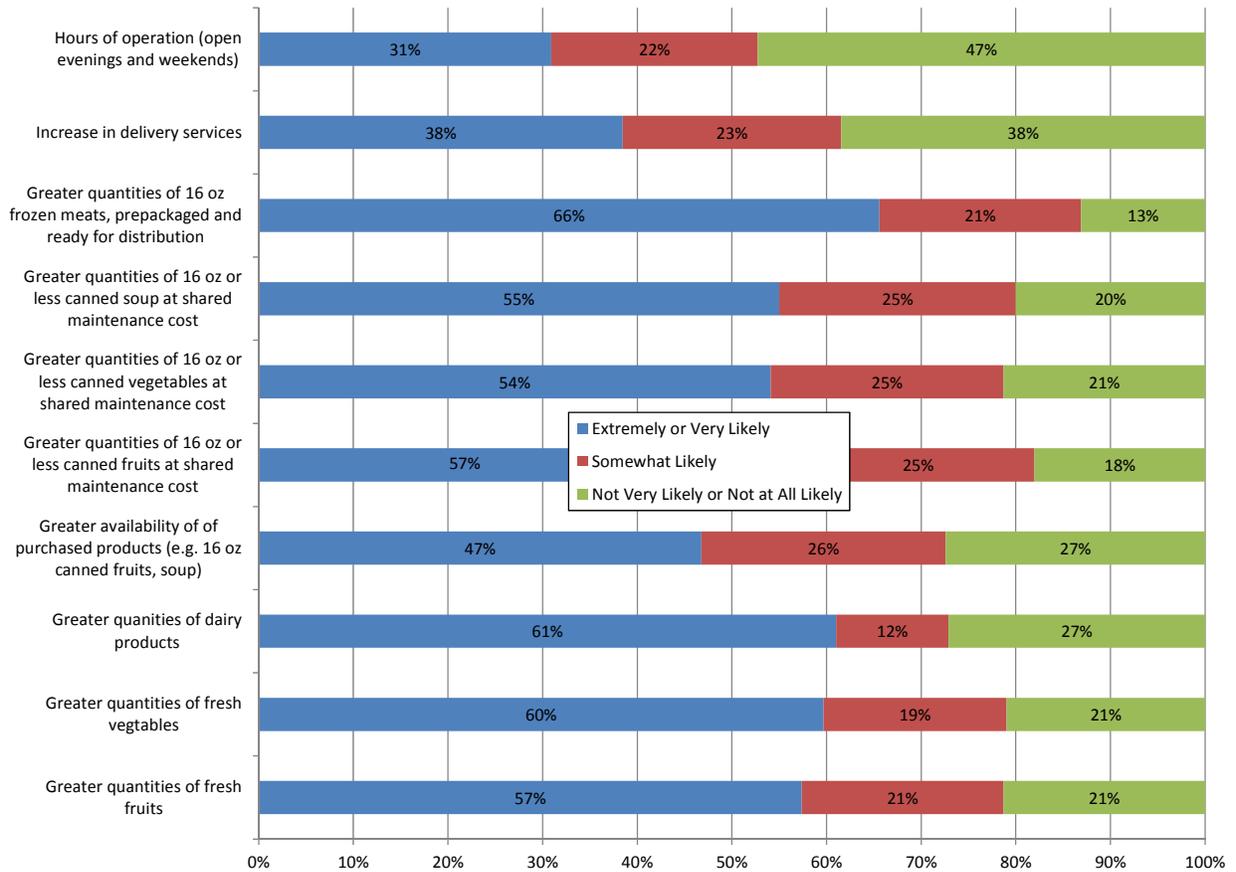
The Purchased Product Program seems to have been most effective in the counties outside of Kent County, especially in the northwest corner of the Lower Peninsula and the upper peninsula of Michigan where retail food prices are much higher than in Kent County. Because the potential savings from buying purchased products from Feeding America of West Michigan in Kent County versus an agency purchasing those items themselves or conducting a can drive, the program is less attractive for emergency food providers in Kent County (Pawl-Knapp, 2009). Given the results of the 2008 study, the marketing campaign from Feeding America of West Michigan to encourage cash donations in lieu of actual food donations from individuals, we thought it

prudent to focus on agency perceptions that would encourage them to make greater use of Feeding America of West Michigan within Kent County. Thus, we asked questions related to agency ability to obtain needed products at the shared maintenance fee of around 16 cents and the purchased products from Feeding America of West Michigan.

As evidenced in Figure 17, there were a variety of issues that may encourage emergency food providers within Kent County to make greater use of Feeding America of West Michigan. Among those saying they would be “extremely” or “very likely” to make greater use of Feeding America of West Michigan, the most notable were the 66% saying that greater quantities of 16 ounce frozen meats, prepackaged and ready for distribution, 61% saying greater quantities of dairy products, 60% of saying greater quantities of fresh vegetables, and 57% saying greater quantities of fresh fruits as well as 16 ounce cans of fruit.

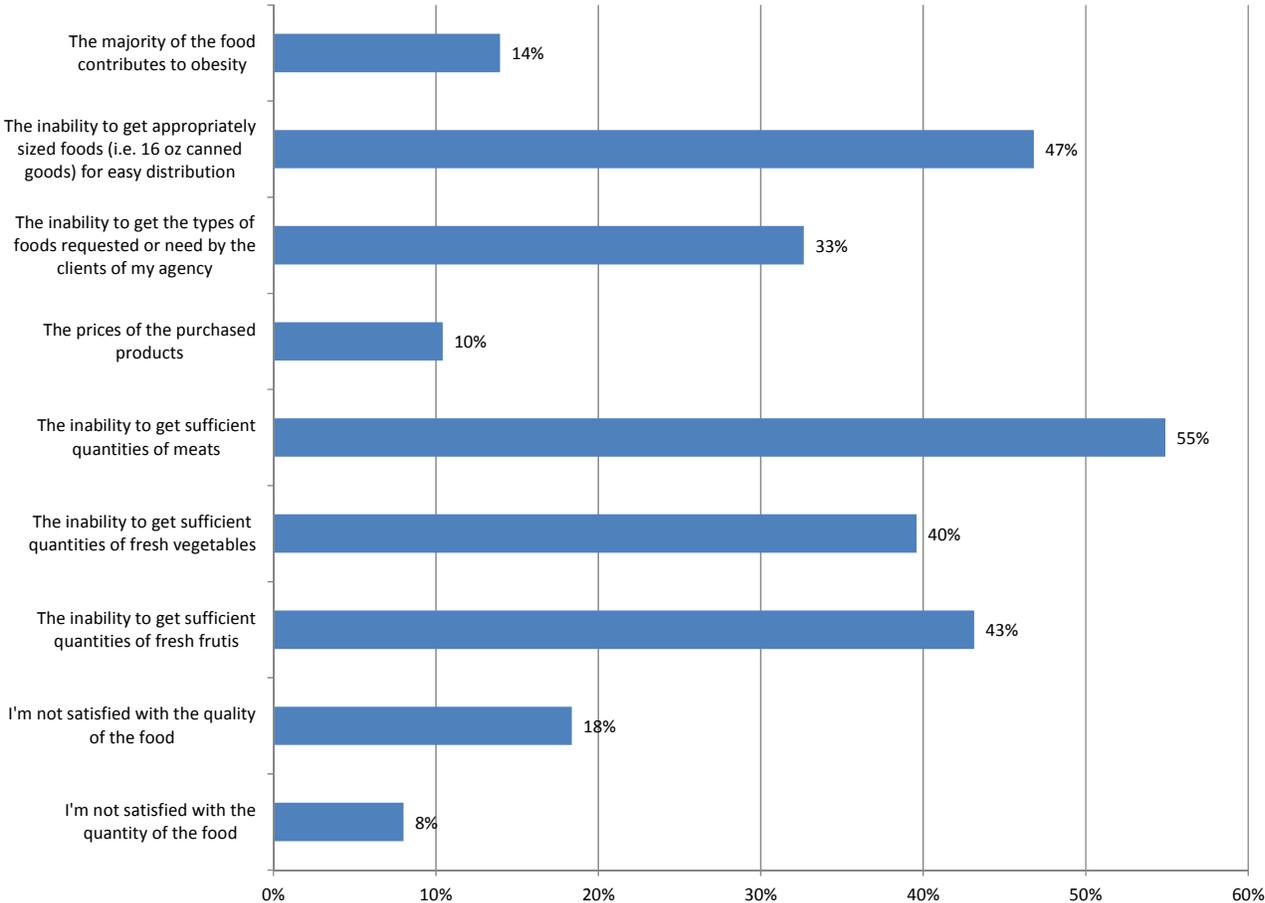
Perhaps most interesting among these results is that it seems to suggest some pricing elasticity in the products sold by Feeding America of West Michigan to the emergency food providers feeding the poor and underserved. When asked about the likelihood of making greater utilization of Feeding America of West Michigan for 16 ounce or less canned items (i.e. soup, vegetables and fruits) at the shared maintenance cost versus the purchased products obtained directly from Feeding America of West Michigan, the percentage of respondents saying they would be “extremely likely” or “very likely” to increase their utilization fell by roughly 10%. In addition, more than a quarter of respondents (27%) said that greater availability of purchased products would make them “not very likely” or “not at all likely” to make greater utilization of the program. Thus, the added costs to the emergency food providers of obtaining coveted food stocks like 16 ounce cans of fruit, vegetables and soups through the purchased product program would seem to have, despite their availability, a dampening effect on demand from many agencies.

Figure 17: Which of the Following Might Make You More Likely to Make Greater Use of Feeding America of West Michigan?



To shed more light on why some emergency food providers do not make better utilization of Feeding America of West Michigan, we simply asked them to identify the specific reasons. Three key issues emerged that were substantially higher than the others. First, 55% of the respondents cited an inability to get sufficient quantities of meats. This was followed by 47% who indicated an inability to get appropriately sized foods (i.e. 16 oz canned goods) for easy distribution. Forty-three percent cited the inability to get sufficient quantities of fresh fruits while 40% cited the inability to get fresh vegetables as the primary reasons for not utilizing Feeding America of West Michigan. The quality and quantity, as well as large quantities of foods contributing to client obesity were far less likely to be listed as impediments to use.

Figure 18: Which of the Following Reasons Your Agency Does Not Utilize or Make Greater Utilization of Feeding America of West Michigan (percent answering “Yes”)?



Selected ACCESS Initiatives

ACCESS of West Michigan began in 1981 in response to federal government cutbacks for social services programs. A group of faith-based and community leaders recognized the need for central coordination of services in order to prevent duplication and maximize resources. ACCESS plays a unique and important role in the community by linking those in need with others who can help. ACCESS engages in three primary initiatives to assist those in need in Kent County:

- Hunger Response - Working to eliminate hunger in the community;
- Casework Services - Helping congregations effectively respond to human needs in the community, and:
- Poverty Education - Educating the community on the realities of poverty and how to respond.

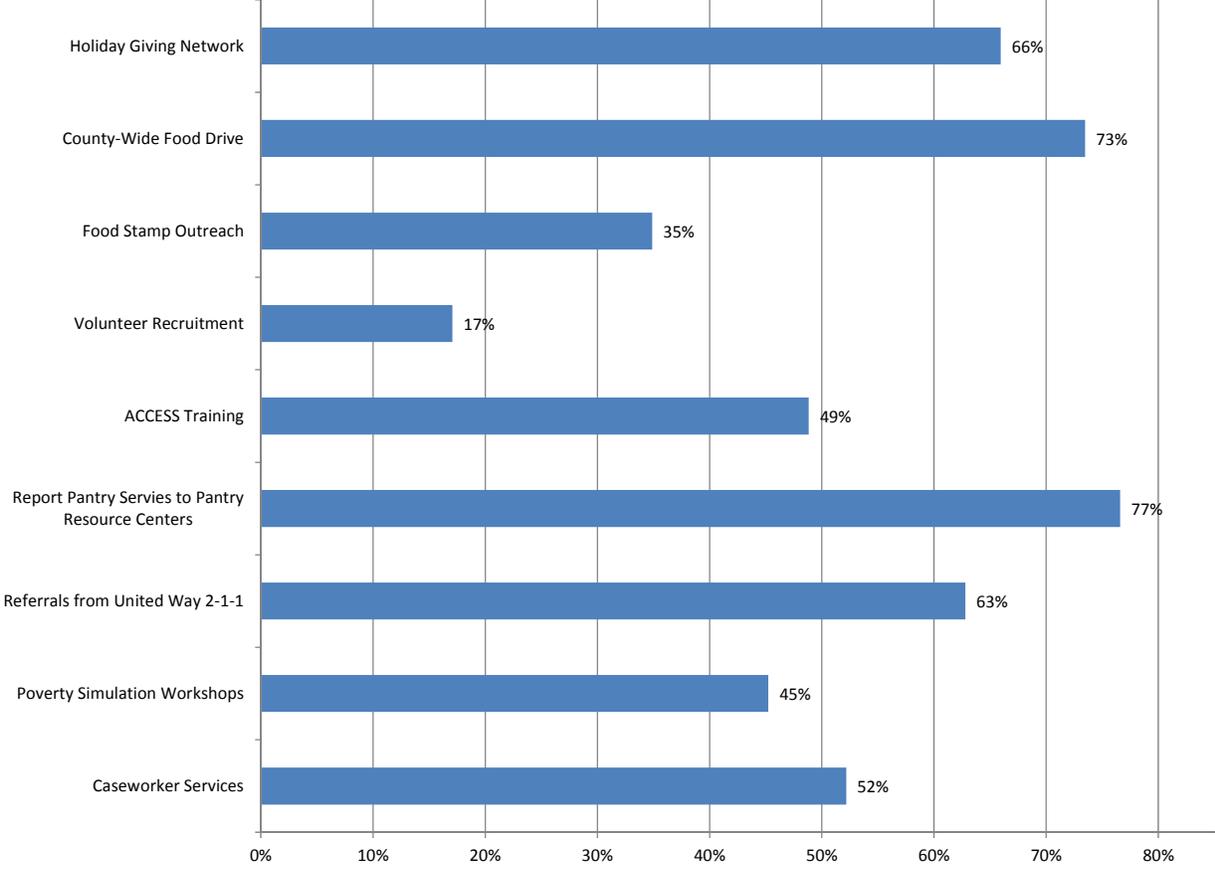
Through these three primary areas, ACCESS offers a myriad of services to agencies, supporting their efforts to serve the needy in Kent County. For example, ACCESS organizes the ACCESS County Wide Food Drive the second Saturday of each October. Within one day, volunteers collect, sort, and pack over 90 tons of food to help restock area food pantries. ACCESS also operates a Food Assistance Program in the Pantry Resource Centers. Every month, the ACCESS Food Assistance Program Coordinator visits each of the 12 ACCESS Pantry Resource Centers in Kent County and helps individuals who are potentially eligible for SNAP benefits, but for a variety of reasons are not receiving it, obtain the benefits they need. Since February 2003, the Food Assistance Program Coordinator has been taking an average of 20-25 applications per month with an average benefit of \$200 per family and serves as a liaison between the clients and the Michigan Department of Human Services.

ACCESS also offers casework services for families or individuals in need requesting assistance from one of its member agencies. Caseworkers help to eliminate duplication of services by assigning those requesting help or assistance to a single

point of contact that can help those with multiple needs. Finally ACCESS offers poverty education and advocacy through a number of avenues such as the poverty simulation experience. The poverty simulation experience is designed to help participants begin to understand what it might be like to live in a typical low-income family trying to survive from month-to-month. The object is to sensitize participants to the realities faced by low-income people. For more information about the various programs that ACCESS offers, please see <http://accessofwestmichigan.org/>.

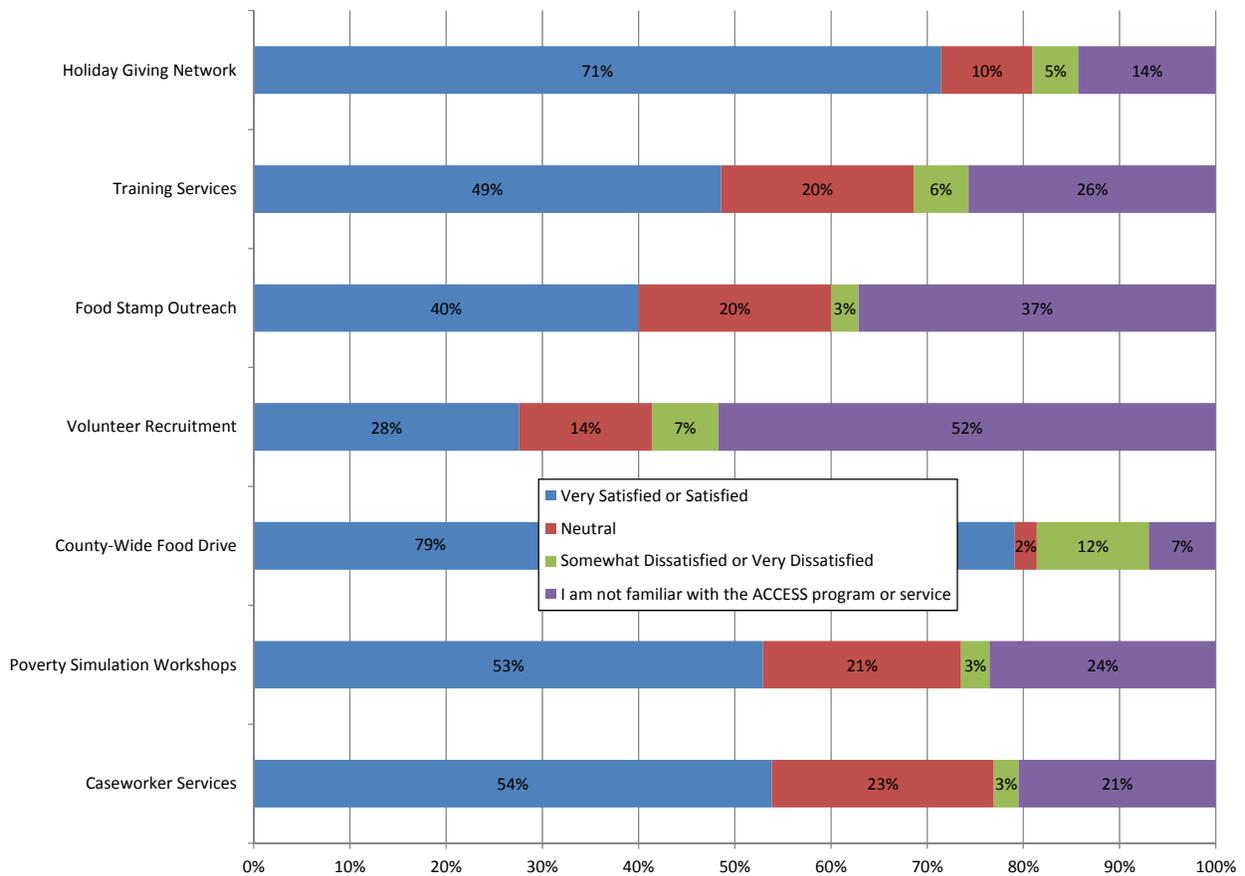
Among the emergency food providers responding to the survey, 53 reported at least some type of relationship with ACCESS. The ACCESS network consists primarily of agencies operating food pantries, thus agencies providing prepared meals were excluded from these questions. Among those agencies operating a food pantry, the majority seem to make good use of ACCESS' services (see Figure 19). The majority of agencies reported participation with reporting pantry services to pantry resource centers (77%). ACCESS has a network of 12 key or primary pantries that offer broader array of services. For example, the smaller pantries may refer clients to the key pantries when they are not open or when the client has needs beyond 3 to 5 day supply of food. Survey participants in the ACCESS network also reported high levels of participation in the County Wide Food Drive (73%) and Holiday Giving Network (66%). Among some of the lower levels of participation among survey respondents were food stamp outreach (35%) and volunteer recruitment (17%).

Figure 19: Agency Participation with ACCESS Initiatives



An overwhelming majority of the agencies affiliated with ACCESS are satisfied with the services provided. Respondents reported their greatest levels of satisfaction with the ACCESS County Wide Food Drive (79%) and the Holiday Giving Network (72%). Where satisfaction levels were lower, it did not always seem to be higher levels of dissatisfaction with the ACCESS programs, but that many respondents were unaware that the services existed. For example, a majority (52%) of respondents were unaware that ACCESS provided member agencies with their volunteer recruitment efforts. More than a third, (37%) were unaware that ACCESS provided food stamp outreach.

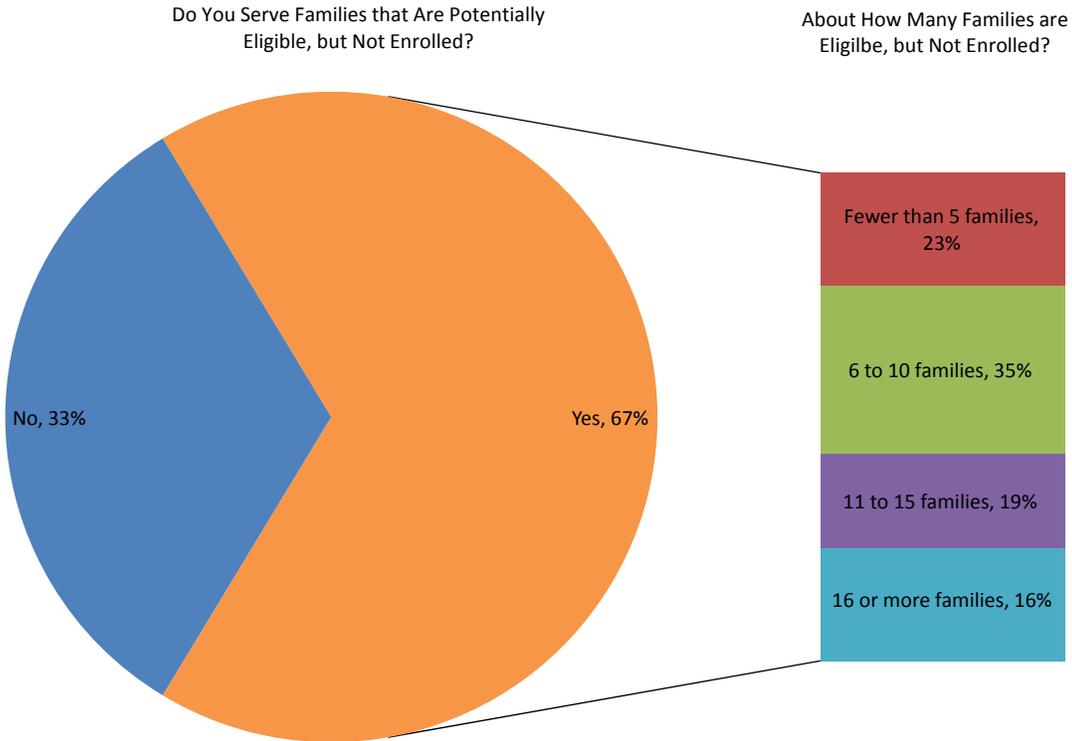
Figure 20: How Satisfied Are You With the Following Services Available From ACCESS?



Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program or SNAP benefits (formally known as food stamps) are increasingly viewed a powerful anti-hunger initiative. Even as the economy has begun its nascent recovery, some 44 million Americans continued to rely on SNAP benefits, representing more than 14% of the population. In states like Michigan, nearly a fifth of the population or more than 1.9 million individuals are receiving SNAP benefits (Food and Nutrition Services, 2011). In an effort to combat hunger, the USDA has supported SNAP benefit outreach efforts to increase participation among those eligible, but not enrolled. Despite these efforts and the growing proportion of those enrolled in SNAP, it is estimated that only half of those eligible are enrolled in the program. Today's active outreach efforts to enroll those potentially eligible for SNAP mark a radical shift in policy from just a decade ago. For example, some ten years ago New York City officials were so reluctant to give out food stamps, they made people register one day and return the next just to get an application. Officials argued that the program caused dependency and the poor were "better off" without it. Today, the city urges the needy to seek aid, and neighborhood groups recruit clients (DeParle & Gebeloff, 2010, February 10).

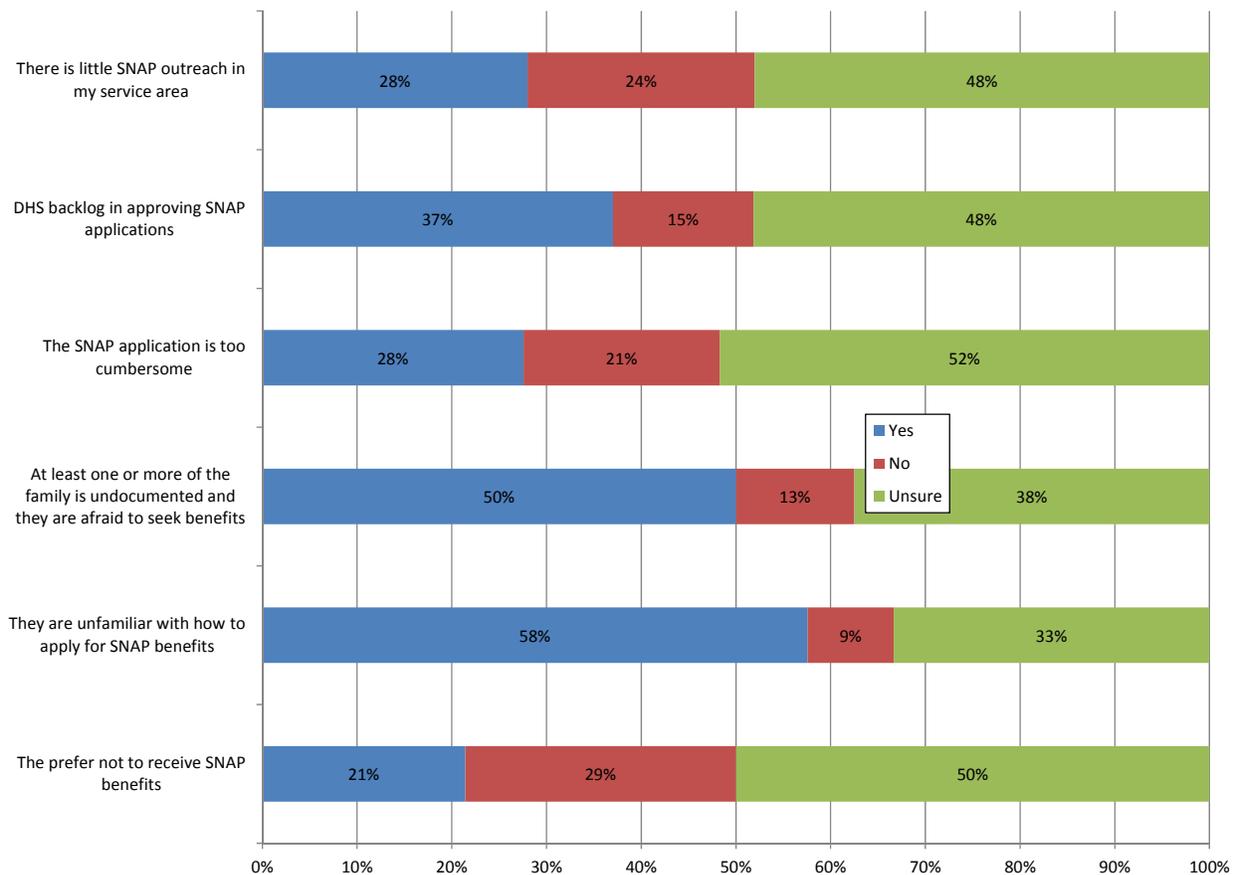
We asked agencies if they believe there are families that they serve that may be eligible for SNAP benefits, but not enrolled. Sixty-seven percent of respondents said that among the families they serve, they believed that at least some of them were eligible for SNAP benefits (pie chart - left hand side of Figure 21). Among those that responded "yes" to the question about serving families that were eligible, but not enrolled, we asked them to estimate about how many families they believed were in this situation (bar chart - right hand side of Figure 21). About a third (35%) believe that the number of families they serve that are potentially eligible for SNAP benefits is between six and ten families, followed by 23% estimating the number of families at fewer than five.

Figure 21: About How Many Families Do You Believe Are Eligible, but Not Enrolled to Receive SNAP Benefits? - If Yes, About How Many Families Served by Your Agency Eligible, But Not Enrolled?



Among those who believe they serve clients that are potentially eligible for SNAP benefits, but not enrolled, we asked them about the reasons they believed the families had not signed up for SNAP benefits. The typical response among most agencies was that they were simply “unsure” as to the reasons the families were not enrolled. Two areas where respondents were able to provide a definitive response, 58% thought the families were unfamiliar with how to apply from SNAP benefits. Fifty percent also believed that at least one or more of the family members was undocumented and afraid (fear of deportation) to seek SNAP benefits. The backlog in the Department of Human Services (DHS) approving SNAP application was also listed as a reason as to why potentially eligible families have not enrolled by 37% of respondents.

Figure 22: Why Do You Believe that Families Are Not Enrolled to Receive SNAP or Food Stamps Benefits?



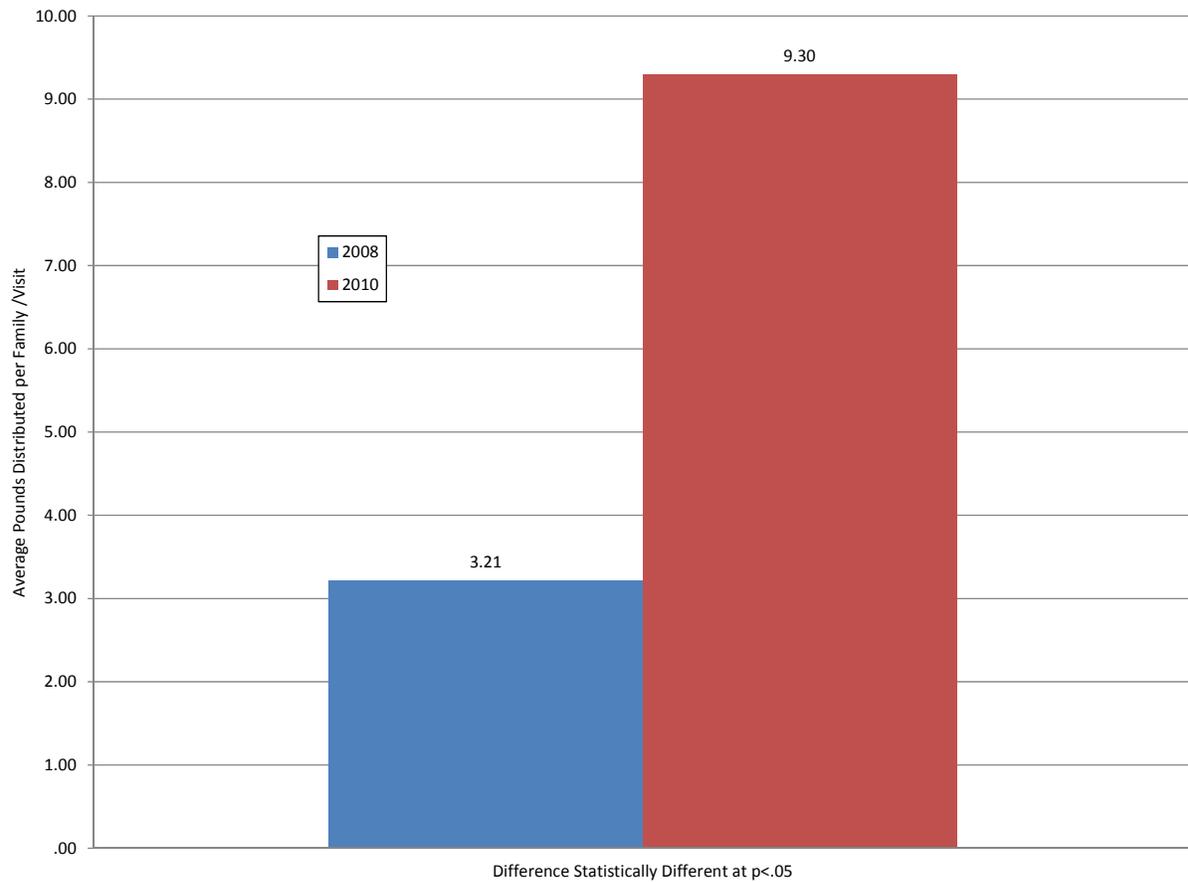
2008 and 2010 Study Comparisons

In 2008, we conducted a similar survey examining agency information, gleaning and purchasing food, capacities, and routing and logistics. Some of the same questions were repeated from the 2008 survey in the most recent 2010 survey. Using the database from the 2008 survey and the 2010, we are able to make a number of comparisons to judge the relative effectiveness of several of the initiatives undertaken by Feeding America of West Michigan, ACCESS and the emergency food system as a whole.

We employed two statistical methods to test for statistically different results between the two survey years. When measuring differences between two means, we employed the Mann-Whitney U test. This test is used for means testing when the distribution of the responses is quite skewed and violates the assumptions of a normal distribution required for the more commonly used t-test. When measuring differences for categorical variables, we employed a chi-square test. Statistically different results at $p < .05$ between the 2008 and 2010 results are noted with an asterisk (*) in each of the following figures. This means that there is less than a 5% chance that the differences between the 2008 and 2010 study results were due to coincidence.

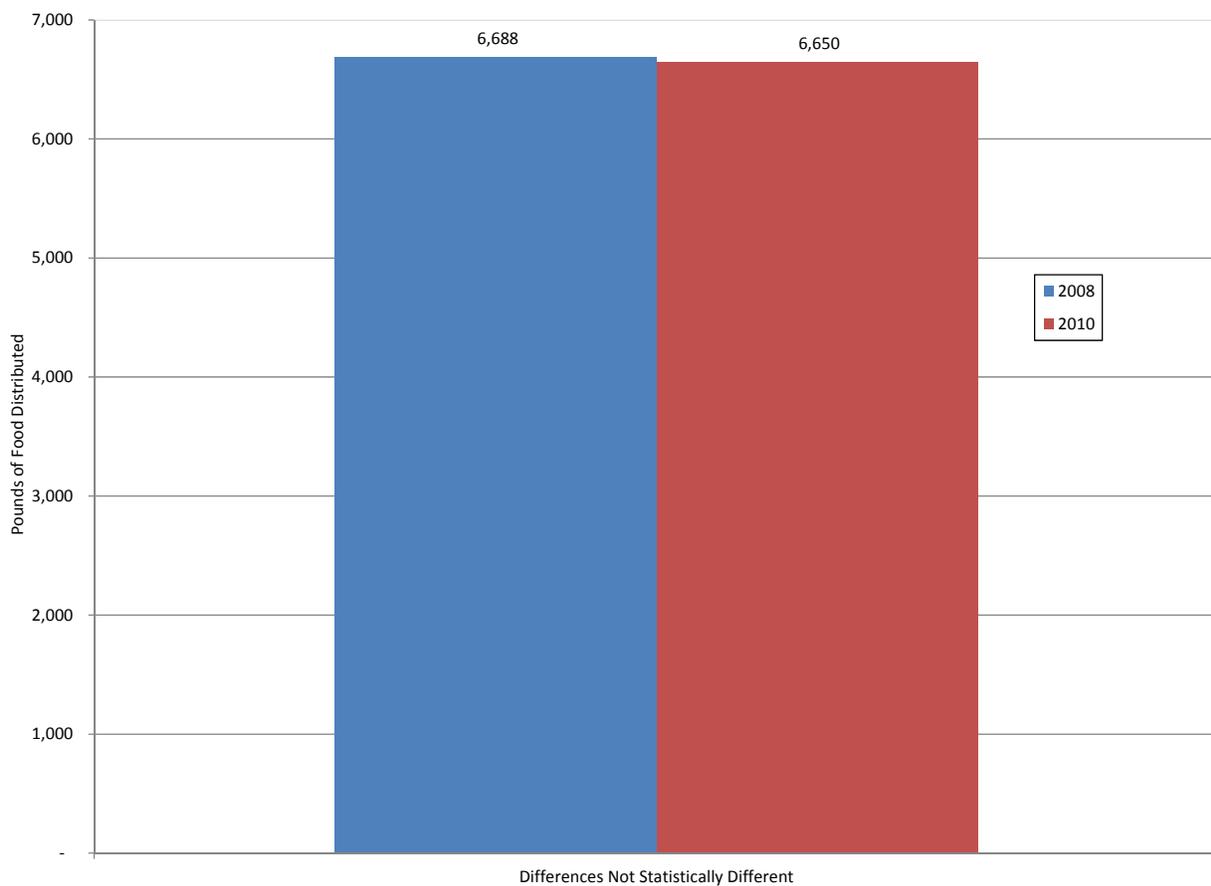
Among food pantries responding to the survey, the average number of families served on the days in which they were open during 2008 was 3.21. During the most recent 2010 survey, agencies reported significantly higher ($p < .05$) numbers of households or families served by their pantries on the days in which they were open. In 2010, the number of households served on the days in which they were open increased nearly threefold to 9.30 households (see Figure 23).

Figure 23: On the Days in Which You Are Open, About How Many Households Do You Serve On An Average Day: 2008 and 2010 Comparison



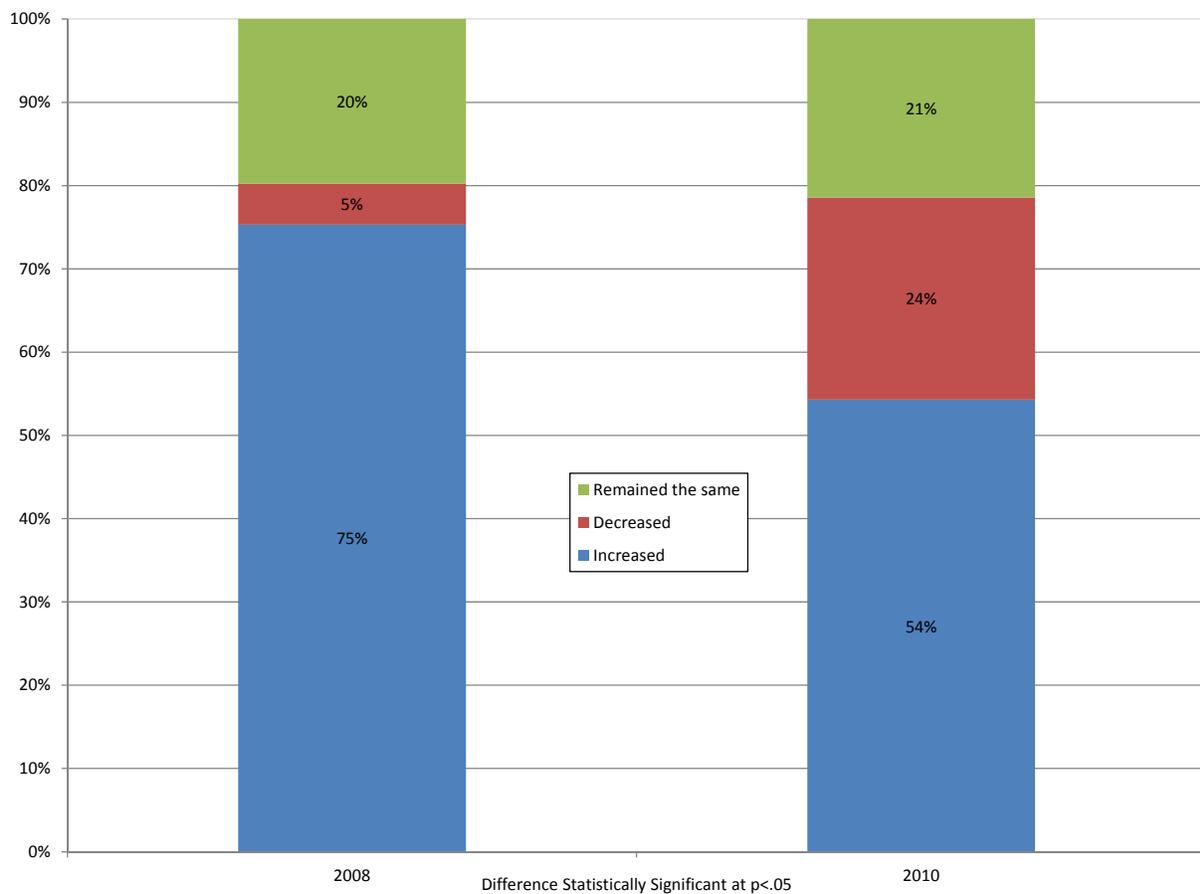
The number of pounds distributed by food pantries responding to the survey was nearly unchanged from 2008 to 2010. In 2008, emergency food providers reported distributing about 6,688 pounds of food each month. During 2010, emergency food providers reported distributing 6,650 pounds of food during the typical month.

Figure 24: Please Estimate About How Many Pounds of Food Your Agency Provides to Clients Each Month: 2008 to 2010 Comparison



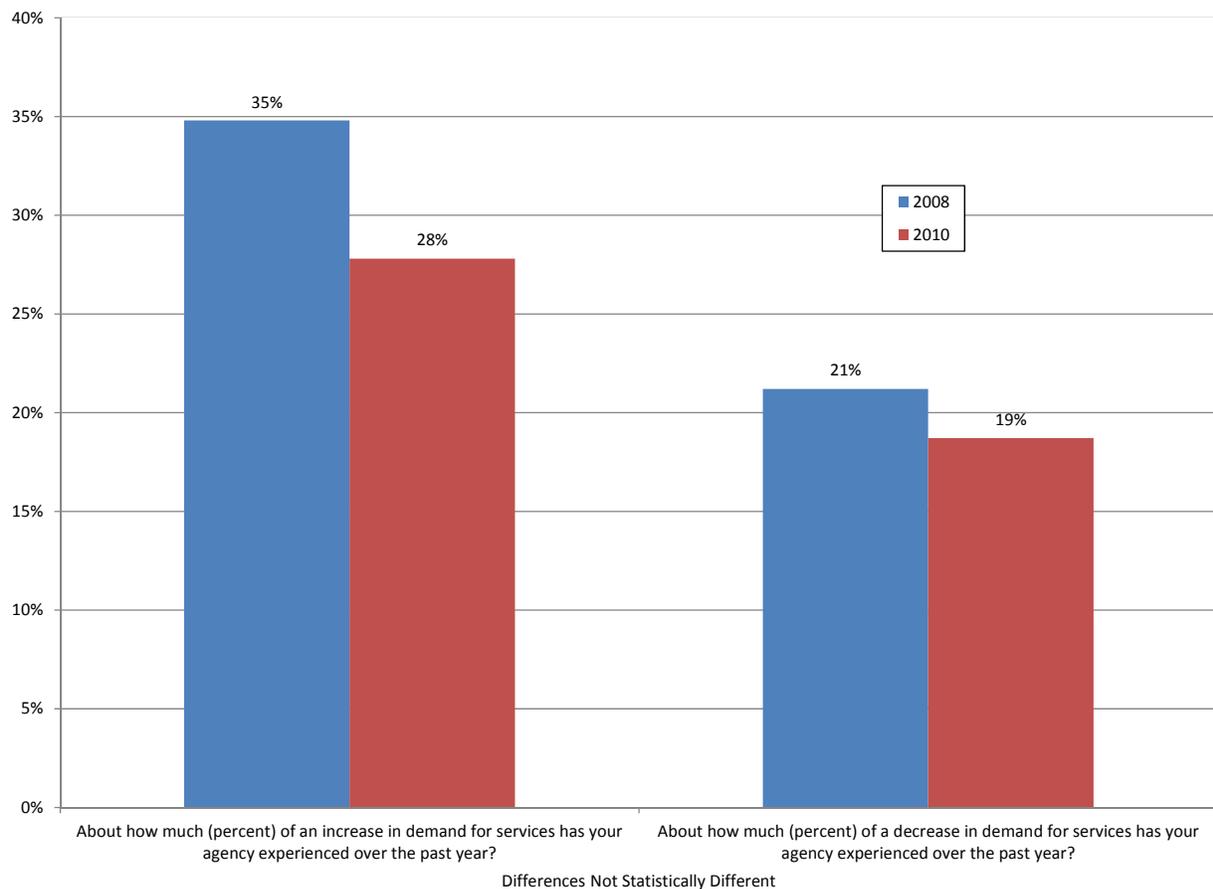
Among respondents, both those operating food pantries and offering prepared meals, a significantly ($p < .05$) lower proportion of respondents in 2010 said that the number of clients they served increased from the previous year when compared to 2008. Although more than half (54%) said that the number of clients they served had increased over the past year, that was much lower than the 75% of respondents offering these views from the 2008 survey. About a quarter (24%) of respondents reported a decrease in the number of clients they served in 2010 versus only five percent from the 2008 study.

Figure 25: During the Past Year, Has the Number of Clients You Serve: 2008 and 2010 Comparison



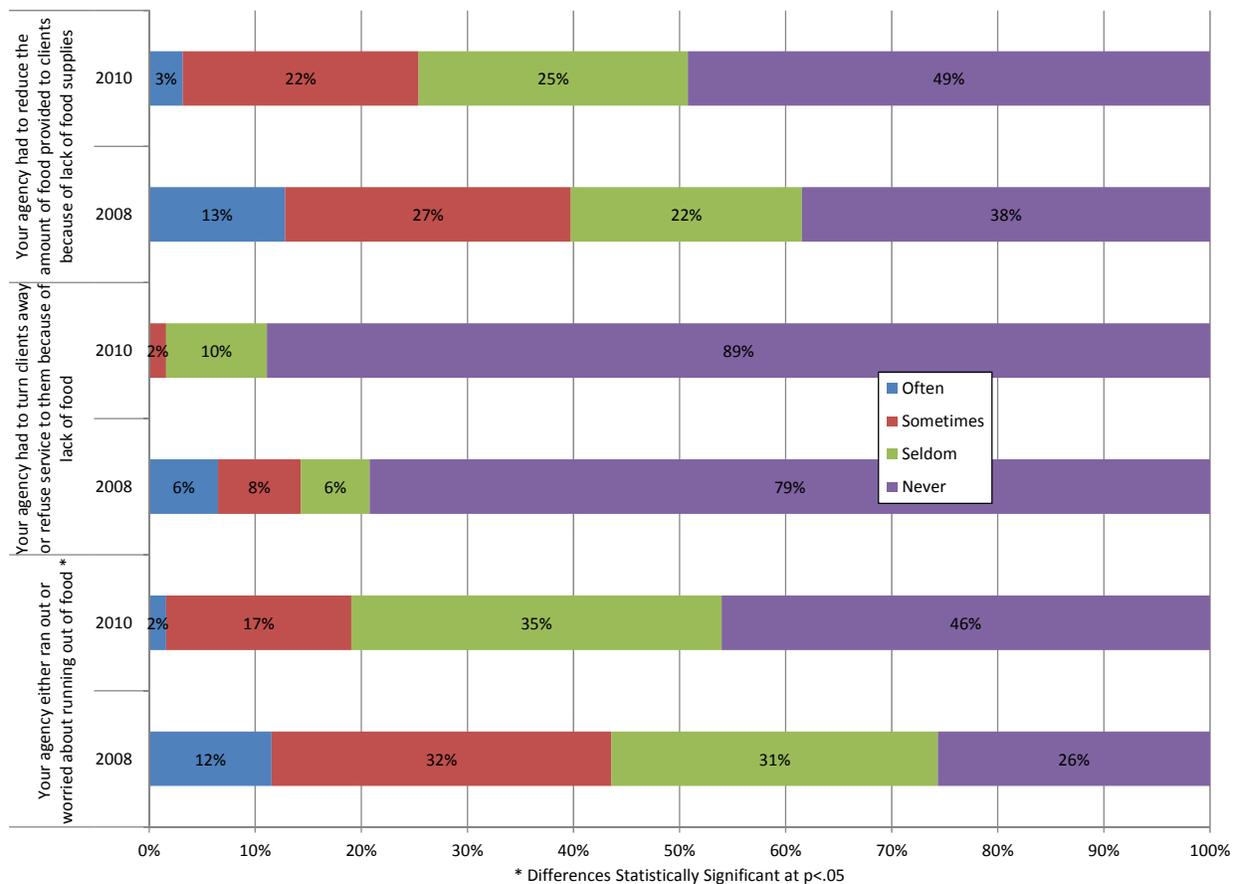
Among those that reported an increase in demand, we asked them to estimate how much of an increase they had seen year over year (see Figure 26). In 2008, the average increase in demand was 35%. In 2010, the average increase in demand was roughly the same at 28%. Among emergency food providers reporting a decrease in service demand, the percentages were also nearly unchanged from 2008 (21%) to 2010 (19%).

Figure 26: About How Much of an Increase (Left Side Of Figure) or Decrease (Right Side Of Figure) in Demand for Services Has Your Agency Experienced Over the Past Year: 2008 and 2010 Comparison



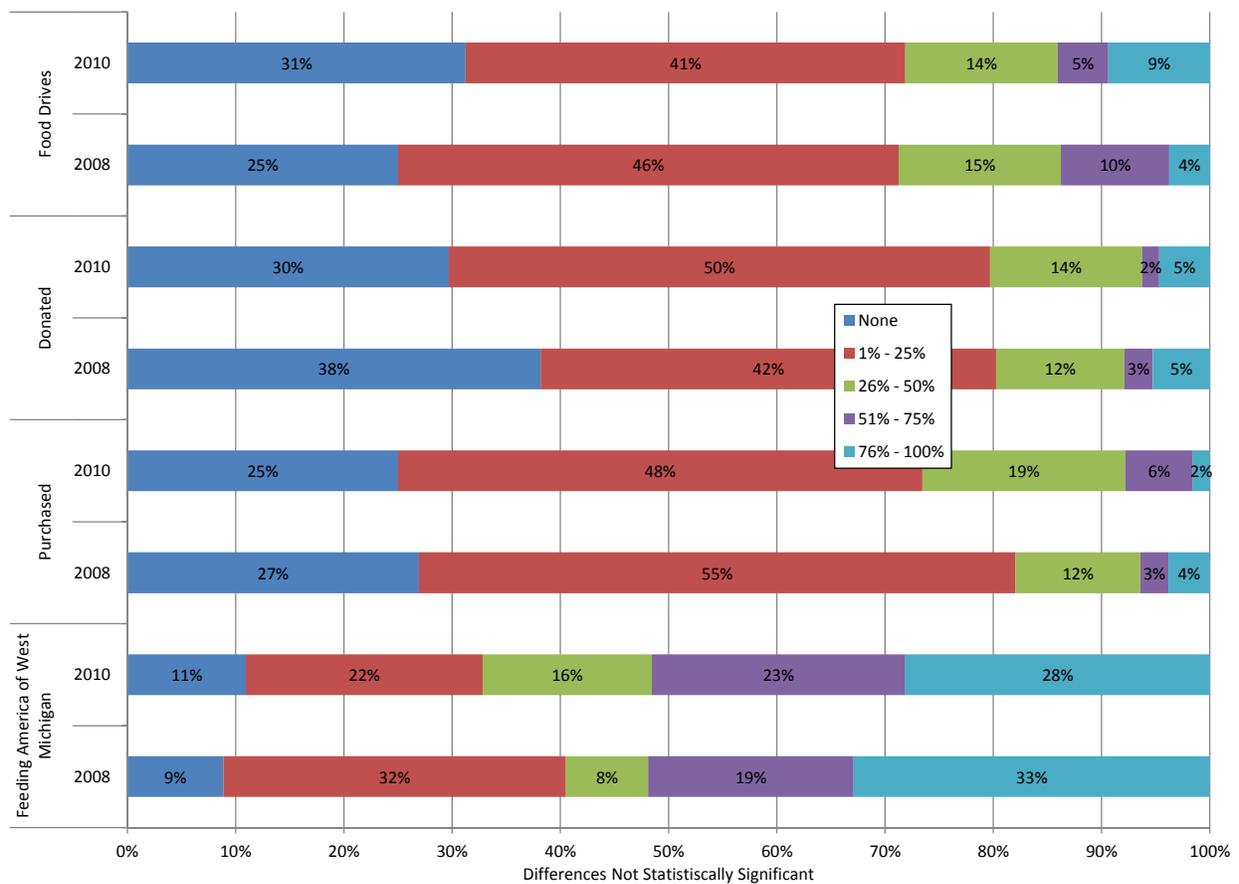
When asked about their food supplies during the past year and their agency’s ability to deliver food services, there were few differences between the 2008 and 2010 survey. Respondents expressed similar sentiments among both survey years when asked about reducing the amount of food provided to clients because of a lack of supplies and turning clients away because of a lack of food. When asked about running out of food, a significantly lower ($p < .05$) proportion of respondents from the 2010 survey period were either (“often” or “sometimes”) worried about their food stocks as compared to respondents from the 2008 survey.

Figure 27: In Considering Your Agency’s Food Supplies During the Past Year, How Would You Respond to Each of the Following: 2008 and 2010 Comparison



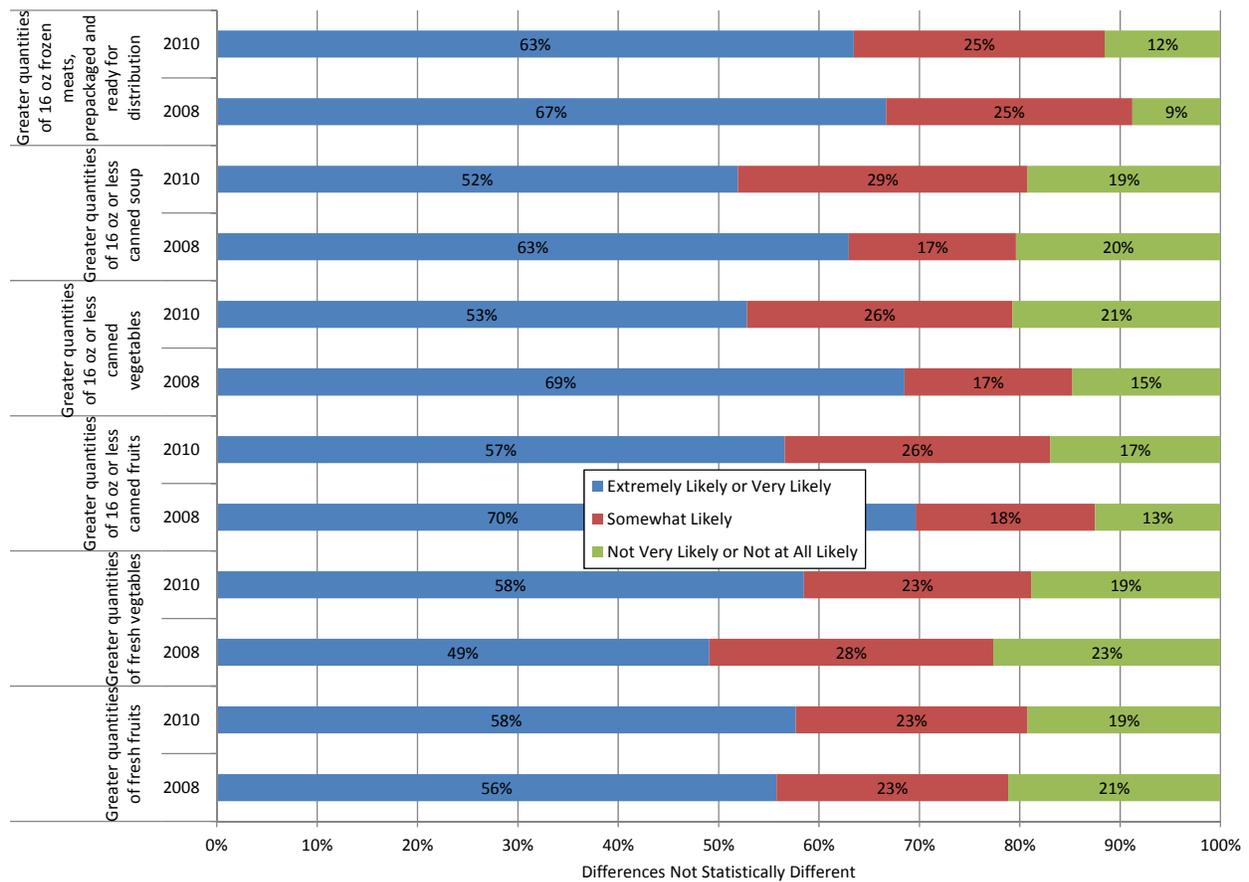
The methods and amounts in which food pantries and those providing prepared meals obtain their food stocks were unchanged between 2008 and 2010. Similar proportions of emergency food providers obtaining their food stocks from food drives, donations (donations from retailers and producers), purchasing (directly purchasing food stocks from retailers like Meijer or Spartan) and Feeding America of West Michigan in 2008 as they did in 2010.

Figure 28: Approximately What Percentage of the Food You Provide to Your Clients is Obtained from the Following Sources: 2008 and 2010 Comparison



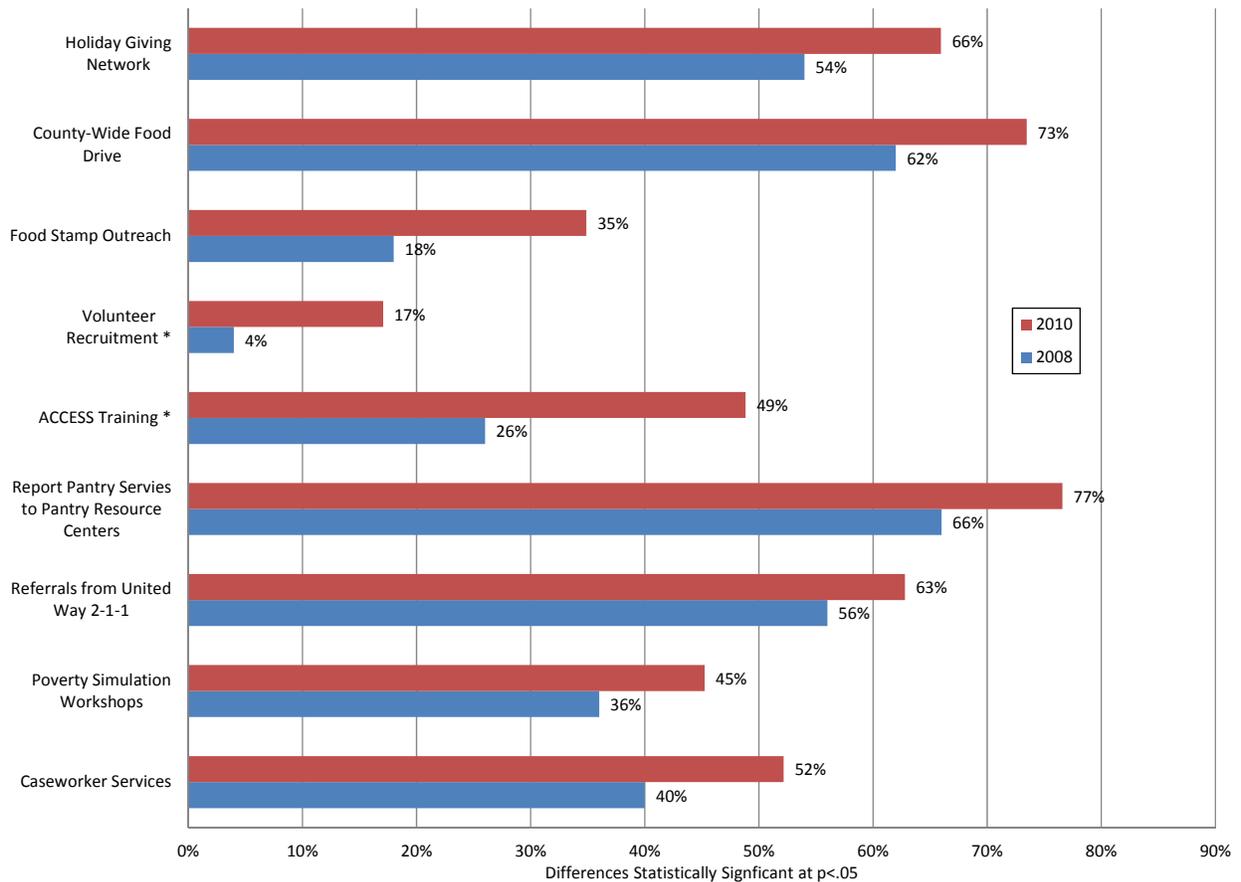
When asked about services or particular food items that would encourage emergency food providers to make greater utilization of Feeding America of West Michigan, the responses between 2008 and 2010 were virtually unchanged as none of the differences were statistically different. While often difficult to obtain for Feeding America of West Michigan, emergency food providers continue to request greater quantities of items that are typically in high demand among pantry patrons. For example, about two thirds of respondents during both survey years said that they would be more likely to use Feeding America of West Michigan if greater quantities of meats, prepackaged and ready for distribution, canned fruits, soup and vegetables (at the shared maintenance price) were more readily available.

Figure 29: Which of the Following Might Make You More Likely to Make Greater Use of Feeding America of West Michigan?



Among agencies that participate in the ACCESS network, agencies reported significantly greater participation ($p < .05$) in two ACCESS initiatives. In 2008, 26% of respondents reported the use of ACCESS to conduct training activities at or for their respective agency. By 2010, the percentage utilizing ACCESS for training services nearly doubled to 49%. The percentage of agencies utilizing ACCESS services to assist them with their volunteer recruitment was just four percent in 2008. By 2010, 17% of respondents were relying on ACCESS to help them with their volunteer recruitment strategies. Agencies continued to report similarly high levels of participation in ACCESS activities during both survey years in the areas of the Holiday Giving Network, the County Wide Food Drive, and Reporting (their) Pantry Services to the Resource Centers.

Figure 30: Agency Participation with ACCESS Initiatives



Conclusions and Recommendations

In 2006, Gordie Moeller (formerly of the Kent County ENTF) began the search for funding to conduct the 2008 Borders and Lindt study. As part of that process, he contacted Fred Keller, Chairman and CEO of Cascade Engineering, Inc. While a successful businessman, Mr. Keller's leadership beyond Cascade Engineering Inc. has attracted nationwide recognition through his dedication to achieving broader community and environmental aims. Mr. Keller and Cascade Engineering Inc. support the Center for Systemic Change Advised Fund at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. Mr. Keller's Center for Systemic Change Advised Fund challenges grant recipients to enact change through moving beyond thinking about single problems and single solutions to considering problems and their solutions holistically. Mr. Moeller's efforts led to a grant from the Center that partially supported the 2008 study, but it was perhaps the challenge Mr. Keller gave to the ENTF and the community that has proven most valuable since the Center's investment in the emergency food system of Kent County. Mr. Keller challenged the researchers and the ENTF in particular, to do more than "produce a report that would soon be gathering dust on the shelf". It was this challenge and the tireless efforts of the many individuals such as Mr. Moeller that were the impetus for many of the new initiatives evaluated in this most recent research. While our community climbs out of the depths of the most recent recession, many challenges remain and there is clearly room for improvement. These initial steps toward improvement in the emergency food system are testament to the commitment this community has for those less fortunate than themselves. Perhaps more importantly is, however, the fact that Mr. Keller's challenge has sparked and the emergency food system of Kent County to fundamentally examine and rethink the way it serves those in need.

The Impact of the New Initiatives

Critics of evaluations such as this study often point to the fact that social science is flawed because it does not result in a true experiment with a control (group that is

not manipulated or does not receive the intervention) and experimental (group that is being manipulated or receives an intervention) group. Further, they are often impacted by extraneous factors outside of the control of the researchers, such as changes in the economy or a push to enroll families and individuals in SNAP. While the introduction of such events make it difficult to understand the precise impact of the Feeding America of West Michigan and ACCESS initiatives, it is clear that a number of positive developments occurred from the investments made from the ENTF Fund. Among the highlights were:

1. A significant increase in the number of clients or patrons the average emergency food provider sees on the days that it is open. The average number of families served on the days in which each emergency food provider was open during 2008 was 3.21 versus 9.30 in 2010.
2. There appears to be greater availability of food in the emergency food system. When asked about running out of food, 47% said they either (“often” or “sometimes”) worried about their food stocks in 2008 as compared to only 17% in 2008.
3. The online ordering system developed by Feeding America of West Michigan had a broad impact on a variety of emergency food providers. Fifty-six percent of emergency food providers reported time savings by using the online ordering system.
4. The bulk processing facility has benefited about a quarter of emergency food providers. While the bulk processing facility had only recently begun full operation at the time of the study, 21% of emergency providers received additional quantities of lean meats in appropriately sized packaging for easy distribution as a result of the new facility.

Despite these and other benefits of the new initiatives undertaken by Feeding America of West Michigan and ACCESS, far too many of the emergency food providers had no knowledge of these new programs and investments.

- **Recommendation: Feeding America of West Michigan and ACCESS must do a better job of informing emergency food providers of the full array of services and opportunities available to them. The investments in capacity building, deliveries and bulk processing cannot reach their full potential if the emergency food providers do not know they exist.**
Those that call Kent County home well understand the uniqueness and the shared concern for the wellbeing of all its citizens. Evidence of community involvement with regard to food assistance is seen through the numerous local food drives, donations to food agencies, support of local farmers to provide pantries and soup kitchens with fresh produce. In Grand Rapids, Kent County's largest city, one-third of adults worked on a community or neighborhood project within the past two years. Although this is not significantly different from national trends, when other measures of social capital are combined, the Grand Rapids community has a higher social capital than the nation. Social capital refers to the collective value of social networks and people's voluntary engagements in social and civic organizations that often result in helping each other (Putnam, 2000). Further, Grand Rapids exceeded expectations of urban communities as over half of the city reported volunteering in the past year (Grand Rapids Community Foundation, 2001).

Despite the capacity and desires of individuals to become involved in their community through volunteering, it is worrying that more than half (52%) of emergency food providers within the ACCESS network had any knowledge of volunteer recruitment services offered by ACCESS. Maintaining the high levels of social capital present in our community requires that we actively and appropriately engage citizens. Given that many of the emergency food providers operate only a few days a month, it is likely to take more than occasional interaction with volunteers to keep them engaged with the issue of food security. In addition, there are perhaps other more effective ways to utilize the abundance of social capital in West Michigan than traditional

“hunger” volunteer events, such as food drives and handing out food at food pantries. Furthermore, more than a third (37%) had no knowledge of ACCESS’ food stamp outreach services despite the fact that a majority of respondents say there are eligible, but not enrolled families accessing their emergency food services. Considering the significant investments made at Feeding America of West Michigan, it is also troublesome that another 38% of agencies were unaware of the new bulk processing facility and nearly half (42%) were unaware of the free delivery services with many of those same agencies expressing needs for food stocks in terms such as “critical” or “much need”. It is incumbent upon the recipients of charitable donations to be good stewards of those funds. Ensuring that donated funds are utilized in the most efficient and appropriate manner must be a priority of any organization receiving those funds. Just as organizations making new investments in capacity must make outreach and informing strategies part of any new investments or initiatives, the foundations making those grants and investments must demand the same as a condition of the receipt of those funds. Further, given that the evaluation of ACCESS’ investments in individual member agencies was beyond the scope of this project, we recommend further study of those investments to determine their effectiveness. Upon completion, the results should be made available to all emergency food providers to share best practices among member agencies to improve operational efficiencies.

A Brief Respite?

The proliferation of emergency food providers in the early 1980s to deal with the issue of hunger were a short-term response to a crisis that has only grown over the last 20 - 25 years. Nationally, the Feeding America network served an estimated 37 million different people in 2010, an increase of 46% since 2005. About 5.7 million or 1 in 50 Americans received emergency food assistance from Feeding America in 2009, an increase of 27% since 2005 (Malbi, Cohen, Potter, & Zhao, 2010a). Locally, Feeding America of West Michigan provided emergency food for an estimated 256,000 in 2009

with about 29,700 individuals receiving emergency food assistance each week (Malbi, Cohen, Potter, & Zhao, 2010b). While the emergency food providers that serve the needy are often among the first to declare that they should not exist, they are likely to remain an integral piece of the safety net as federal and state policy makers remain preoccupied with restarting the moribund economy and dealing with the increasingly negative impacts of budget deficits.

- **Recommendation:** The emergency food system in Kent County must continue to reexamine how it provides food to those in need and keep in place a strong focus on process measurement and outcomes as means of continuous improvement. Although a majority of emergency food providers reported an increase in service demand year-over-year, both ACCESS and Feeding America of West Michigan have reported a drop in demand over the past year. While Marsha DeHollander of ACCESS and John Arnold of Feeding America largely attributed those declines to the expanded use of SNAP benefits, there is reason to believe that trend will be short-lived (Scott, 2010, October 22). Virtually every aspect and corner of the world, national, state and local economy has been severely impacted by what pundits are now calling the Great Recession. Although the National Bureau of Economic Research, the official arbiter of the start and end dates of recessions in the U.S., determined that the most recent recession officially ended in June of 2009 (The National Bureau of Economic Research, 2010), the U.S. economy remains in a fragile state.

Although the stock market has bounced smartly off the 2009 lows and the U.S. banking system back on firmer financial footing, federal, state and local budgets are now hemorrhaging red ink. The federal budget deficit is projected to reach a record of nearly \$1.5 trillion in 2011 due to the weak economy and higher spending (Paletta, Hook, & Weisman, 2010, January 27). In state fiscal year 2012, newly elected Michigan Governor Rick

Snyder's budget assumes a \$1.26 billion budget deficit. Governor Snyder's budget calls for deep cuts to k-12 education, higher education and revenue sharing with cities while raising taxes on many residents (State Budget Office, 2011). One potentially damaging proposal to low-income populations is eliminating the Michigan earned income tax credit (EITC). The EITC is a refundable federal income tax credit for low to moderate income working individuals and families. Further, the recent 13.6% increase in SNAP benefits is scheduled only to remain in place until the program's regular annual inflation adjustments overtake the benefit increase. Although the increase in benefits seem to have alleviated some pressure on emergency food providers in the short term, increasing food inflation has begun to erode the purchasing power of those additional benefits. While inflation has been relatively weak since the beginning of the recession, higher food commodity and energy prices are now exerting pressure on wholesale and retail food prices. The USDA is predicting inflation for food products such as beef, cereal and dairy products to accelerate through 2011 (Economic Research Service - US Department of Agriculture, 2011).

As a result, organizations such as Feeding America of West Michigan, ACCESS and the emergency food providers will remain an integral part of serving the needs of our most vulnerable citizens. With the prospect of the loss of the EITC in Michigan, inflation eroding the value of the additional SNAP benefit increase, and likely reduced state and federal spending on virtually all government programs, the pressure on safety net organizations such as emergency food providers will undoubtedly increase in the coming months or years. The emergency food system in Kent County must continue to closely monitor current trends to plan and quickly adapt for future challenges as they arrive.

Moving from Hunger to Food Security

It is clear the idea of addressing hunger has evolved into the broader definition of food security. The idea of hunger is predicated on the physical sensation associated of going without food or receiving an incomplete meal. Food security is defined as access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life - based on the idea of a balanced diet. While it appears that there are ample food supplies within the emergency food network in Kent County to address the problem of hunger, the capacity to address the problem of food security is a much more difficult and complicated question. Nearly a third of emergency food providers questioned the nutritional content of the food available to them from Feeding America of West Michigan, the largest source of food to the emergency food system in West Michigan. There was near universal need among providers for food stocks typically associated with better health and nutrition, such as the need for lean meats, fish and poultry (93%), fresh fruits and vegetables (88%) and dairy products (81%). This is compared to lower levels of need for products such as deserts (26%) and snack foods (28%). Further, about two-thirds of emergency food providers quantified their needs for fresh fruits and vegetables and lean meats as “critical” or “much need”. These statistics are telling for the simple fact that the majority of emergency food providers in Kent County seem to have clearly moved away from the mindset of simply providing calories to hungry people to addressing food security. Despite this fact, there appear to be large gaps in the emergency food system to adequately address food security.

- **Recommendation: Community leaders must work toward a clearer definition of food security to better assist emergency food providers and food banks, such as Feeding America of West Michigan in obtaining nutritionally appropriate food donations to ensure that those seeking assistance are having their nutritional needs sufficiently met. Fully and appropriately addressing food security in lieu of merely hunger is undoubtedly a more difficult and challenging problem. However, addressing something less than food security and maintaining the current course is**

likely to exacerbate current health problems among the poor at great public expense. As a society, we are only trading the current problem of food insecurity for the more expensive and challenging problems of chronic disease, decreased productivity and higher health care costs in the future. While Feeding America of West Michigan has an abundance of food, it may not always have an abundance of meats, fresh fruits, canned fruits, milk and dairy products; the kind of staples associated with food security.

While many emergency food providers often quick to assign blame to Feeding America of West Michigan for deficiencies in the emergency food system, the low-cost foods that food banks such as Feeding America provide to emergency food providers is totally dependent upon the donations it receives from food producers, farmers and retailers. The availability of food stocks to organizations like Feeding America of West Michigan is often limited and highly variable, impacting the selection and quality of the foods available to emergency food providers. Teresa Pawl-Knapp of Feeding America once lamented that “many agencies believe we’re Wal-Mart” meaning that there is a fundamental misunderstanding about what types, the quantities and availability of foods that are typically donated to food banks. Foods typically donated are frequently not essential staples of a healthy diet, forcing Feeding America of West Michigan to develop programs such as the pilot Purchased Product Program. While an appropriate policy response given the demonstrated need for essential staples among emergency food providers, many simply reject the idea or cannot pay for the additional costs associated with essential staples. Further, over half (56%) of emergency food providers reported that the food they received as donations from retailers like Meijer either “often” or “sometimes” contributed to client obesity problems. Products from many retailers often consist of day-old pastries and other sweetened baked goods. All of this is further evidence of a system reliant on donations promoting a system that is disassociated with the needs of those it serves.

Only by defining the food security needs of the individuals and families of the community as a whole can we begin to facilitate constructive conversations with the individuals and the organizations that make food donations to Feeding America of West Michigan and the emergency food providers so that these donations can be better aligned with the needs of those they are serving. In defining the food security needs of the community, the true costs of addressing the issue in a responsible way must be documented. We must align emergency food provider expectations (i.e. needs for nutritionally appropriate items) with the realities of their costs. Addressing food security in a responsible way in our community cannot be accomplished merely through the current level of corporate and retail food donations or the USDA commodities provided through Feeding America of West Michigan no more than it can be by the pantry providing powdered milk and candied yams to those seeking aid. By better understanding the needs and the true costs involved, the community can come together around mutually shared goals with a vision and plan upon how to achieve those goals.

In developing this shared vision for addressing food insecurity we ask all emergency food providers to consider: What is the appropriate response for each church or nonprofit to develop, fund and administer food programs? With over 350 different organizations providing food relief in Kent County, should every church or nonprofit operate a food pantry? Is there a more appropriate way to address the problem? These questions are undoubtedly difficult to answer and will surely elicit strong emotions and reactions from many. In the absence of knowing precisely what the appropriate response for each organization should be, we challenge all emergency food providers to examine their role in addressing food insecurity in Kent County and to work collectively toward shared goals in an era of increasing needs and perhaps less federal, state and local support to achieve these ends.

Continued Investments in Capacity Building

Even if the emergency food system were to transform from the current haphazard system of donated foods into one with consistent amount of nutritious, low-cost foods, enormous challenges remain. It is abundantly clear from the survey findings that there is little capacity within the emergency food system to effectively receive, store and distribute nutrient dense foods to those in need.

- **Recommendation: The community should consider investments in capacity building among emergency food providers and consider innovative approaches to addressing the problem.** Despite there being over 350 agencies providing some kind of emergency food services in Kent County alone, the desire to address food insecurity does not align with organizational capacities or commitment to adequately address the need. Nearly a fifth of all emergency food providers lack the ability to receive and store perishable food items like milk and dairy products and fresh fruits and vegetables. Because many emergency food providers operate in inappropriate space for receiving, storing and distributing nutrient dense foods like church basements or parish halls, their ability to serve is also greatly diminished.

We offer suggestions that may be more appropriate for emergency food providers with limited capacities to eschew further investments in their own physical pantries and invest in initiatives such as Feeding America of West Michigan's mobile food pantries. Mobile food pantries lesson the problems of storage and transportation by bringing food directly into neighborhoods with high needs. Feeding America of West Michigan recently received a \$150,000 refrigerated truck from Kraft Foods that distributing food directly to the needy in Benton Harbor. Investments to increase the availability of mobile pantries may be more effective in reducing food insecurity than investing in small, inefficient food pantries. For example, a refrigerated

mobile pantry can distribute perishable items on short notice and relieves emergency food providers with sporadic hours and low food stocks of the need to store and distribute items. The mobile pantries, however, suffer from similar deficits of nutritionally appropriate items because these trucks are completely sourced from Feeding America of West Michigan. Thus, any initiative is going to fall short of fully addressing food insecurity if the requisite investments in increasing the levels of nutritionally appropriate foods are not increased. For some facilities with appropriate facilities and located in areas with consistent need, it may clearly be effective to invest in building and equipment upgrades to increase capacity. These decisions are highly dependent on local circumstances, but overall - any new investments in capacity should focus on building a distribution system that can promote the receipt, storage and distribution of healthier foods.

New Sources of Nutritious Foods - Systems Thinking

While demand for nutritious foods available to adequately address food insecurity appears to be outstripping the supply, client needs go unfulfilled. This occurs while a potential, but perhaps only partial solution to the problem exists in Michigan. Second only to California, Michigan has the greatest crop diversity in the nation. It leads in the production of dry beans, blueberries, cherries, Niagara grapes, squash and cucumbers (National Agricultural Statistics Service & Michigan Field Office, 2009). Sadly, millions of tons of fruit and vegetables rot in fields and orchards or are plowed over each year. In a 2009 article in the *Wall Street Journal*, Leonard Ligon, a cherry grower near Traverse City, generated a lot of local press when he dumped 72,000 pounds of cherries alongside a country road near his farm (Etter, 2009).

Figure 31: Leonard Ligon of Traverse City, Stands in Mounds of Dumped Cherries



The fact that fresh fruits and vegetable lie rotting in Michigan fields while significant proportions of emergency food providers list the needs for such items as “critical” is a travesty. Dena Rogers, Volunteer Coordinator of Feeding America of West Michigan, has begun some limited gleaning and salvage operations of locally grown fruits and vegetables. Through those efforts, small groups of volunteers converge on local farms and orchards to glean fresh fruits and vegetables for the food bank after the primary harvesting is complete. For example, last April, a group of volunteers organized by Ms. Rogers retrieved 663 pounds of carrots and parsnips from the Groundswell Farm. Those vegetables were almost immediately distributed on one of Feeding America of West Michigan’s mobile pantries in Cadillac. Despite the success of instances such as these, there remains far too much potentially available food that could be gleaned in West Michigan and far too little capacity to seize upon such opportunities.

- **Recommendation: Support efforts to plan and build local gleaning systems that would reduce waste from local farms and orchards and put much needed fresh fruits and vegetables into the emergency food system.** Community leaders must come together with the appropriate parties to explore the infrastructure and supply chain activity required to engage in more consistent gleaning and salvaging. These efforts are likely to take a range of skills and resources beyond the current system's capacities, but seem to be a potentially viable avenue to link locally grown produce to those in need at low-cost.

Locally, the Michigan Good Food initiative (<http://www.michiganfood.org>) is developing a policy agenda to support food that is healthy, green, fair and affordable. One of the strategic goals of the initiative is to encourage new markets and the consumption of locally grown food from Michigan. We recommend that local community leaders engage appropriate parties at the Michigan Good Food initiative, such as the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems at Michigan State University (<http://www.mottgroup.msu.edu>), the Food Bank Council of Michigan (<http://www.fbcmich.org>) and the Michigan Food Policy Council (<http://www.michigan.gov/mfpc>) for their assistance in developing a feasibility study to develop and implement a broad initiative to bring more locally grown food to the emergency food system.

The science of nutrition has a long history that stretches back to at least Hippocrates who regarded proper eating habits as nearly inseparable from medicine. Although these links have long been established, the science associating poverty and poor eating habits with their deleterious impacts on health outcomes has only recently begun to emerge. Developed societies such as the U.S. have seen declining death rates from infectious disease over the past 50 to 75 years due to advances in hygiene, vaccines and the invention of antibiotics. As life expectancy has increased, so has the incidence of chronic disease. Today, chronic disease is among the nation's greatest

killers due largely to lifestyle factors. Among the ten leading causes of death in the U.S, four are diet-related (National Center for Health Statistics, 2009):

- 1: Heart Disease
- 2: Cancer
- 3: Stroke
- 6: Diabetes

To believe that we can solve all food security issues simply by increasing the amount and distribution of nutritious foods to those in need is at best naïve. At worst, negligent. Increasing the amount and distribution of nutritious foods is an enormously challenging problem in and of itself. Unfortunately, a food system replete with nutritious foods is still likely to fall short in achieving societal and public health goals of improving the overall health of the low-income populations dependent on the emergency food system. George Orwell's observations in 1937 on poverty and poor eating habits are a particularly poignant reminder of the challenges generations before us and we continue to face in serving those in need. The ultimate solutions to the challenge of food insecurity will indeed require an approach far more comprehensive than simply getting food to those in need. It will undeniably require a systems approach.

"The basis of their (the poor) diet is white bread and margarine, corned beef, sugared tea and potatoes. Would it not be better if they spent more money of wholesome things like oranges and whole meal bread?" Yes it would he answered, but "no ordinary human being is ever going to do such a thing. The ordinary human being would sooner starve than live on brown bread and raw carrots ... A millionaire may enjoy breakfasting off orange juice and Ryvita, an unemployed man doesn't ... When you are underfed, harassed, bored and miserable, you don't want to eat dull, wholesome food. You want something a little bit tasty!"

George Orwell, 1937

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Appendix A

Food Assistance Agency Survey

This survey is part of a follow-up study completed in 2008 by Grand Valley State University for the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force. This survey is designed to assess the capabilities of agencies that provide food assistance to Kent County's most vulnerable citizens. The information gathered here is part of an ongoing effort to understand and improve the distribution of foods to agencies such as yours in Kent County.

This project is a part of a collaborative effort supported by the Kent County Emergency Needs Task Force and ACCESS of West Michigan. The research is being conducted by Grand Valley State University and is supported through a grant from GVSU. Although your participation in this study is voluntary, participation from all Kent County agencies is vital to ensuring the success of this study.

When completing the survey, please note that ***your estimates for many of the questions concerning the quantity of food and services your agency provides will suffice.*** Thus, it is not necessary to burden yourself with looking up or calculating exact numbers. Our tests with agencies in Kent County have found that the survey takes less than 15 minutes to complete. If you are unable to complete the survey in a single attempt, you may save your answers and return the survey at a later time by clicking the "Resume Later" below each survey question. The survey program will take you through a couple of short steps on how to return to the survey where you left off at another time.

Please be assured that all responses are strictly confidential. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact Professor Steve Borders at Grand Valley State University, (616) 331-6569 or borderss@gvsu.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by Professor Borders, you may contact the Grand Valley State University Human Subjects Review Committee Chair, Paul Huizenga, via telephone: (616) 331-2472.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with our project!

There are 38 questions in this survey

Agency Information

1

What is the name of your organization?

Please write your answer here:

2 Contact information for the individual completing this survey. (This information is voluntary and will only be used in the event for follow-up and further questions regarding this study).

Please write your answer(s) here:

Name	<input type="text"/>
Phone	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>

3 Does your agency function as a food pantry? That is, does your agency provide three to five-day food packages to individuals or families that have a place to live, but not enough food?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
 No

4 Please estimate about how many pounds of food your agency provides to clients each month.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '3 [A5]' (Does your agency function as a food pantry? That is, does your agency provide three to five-day food packages to individuals or families that have a place to live, but not enough food?)

Please write your answer here:

5 In a normal month, about how many days each month is your agency open for food distribution? (For example, if your agency is open eight days a month, please enter it in numerical format as 8).

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '3 [A5]' (Does your agency function as a food pantry? That is, does your agency provide three to five-day food packages to individuals or families that have a place to live, but not enough food?)

Please write your answer here:

6 On the days in which you are open, about how many households do you serve on an average day?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '3 [A5]' (Does your agency function as a food pantry? That is, does your agency provide three to five-day food packages to individuals or families that have a place to live, but not enough food?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Fewer than 10
 10 to 25
 26 to 50

- 51 to 75
- 76 to 100
- More than 100

7 Does your agency provide prepared meals to clients? For example, does your agency provide meals to families or individuals in need either on your premises or at the family's or individual's home?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'No' at question '3 [A5]' (Does your agency function as a food pantry? That is, does your agency provide three to five-day food packages to individuals or families that have a place to live, but not enough food?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

8 Please estimate the number of prepared meals your agency provided to clients during the past year.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '7 [A9]' (Does your agency provide prepared meals to clients? For example, does your agency provide meals to families or individuals in need either on your premises or at the family's or individual's home?)

Please write your answer here:

9 In an average week, how many days does your agency serve prepared meals?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '7 [A9]' (Does your agency provide prepared meals to clients? For example, does your agency provide meals to families or individuals in need either on your premises or at the family's or individual's home?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 1 day per week
- 2 days per week
- 3 days per week
- 4 days per week
- 5 days per week
- 6 days per week
- 7 days per week

10 What is your agency's primary function? (please select one)

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'No' at question '7 [A9]' (Does your agency provide prepared meals to clients? For example, does your agency provide meals to families or individuals in need either on your premises or at the family's or individual's home?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Food pantry
- Food kitchen
- Home delivered meals
- Coordinating/advocacy agency
- Other

11 During the past year, has the number of clients you serve:

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Decreased
- Increased
- Remained the same
- Don't know

12 About how much (percent) of an increase in demand for services has your agency experienced over the past year? *(Please indicate as a number and do not include the percent sign) For example - if demand for at your agency has increased 50% - please indicate with "50".*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Increased' at question '11 [A13]' (During the past year, has the number of clients you serve:)

Please write your answer here:

13 Do believe the following reasons are responsible for the increased demand at your agency?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Increased' at question '11 [A13]' (During the past year, has the number of clients you serve:)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Yes	No	Unsure
Increase in poverty in Kent County	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rise in unemployment in Kent County	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Growing number of working poor in Kent County	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Yes	No	Unsure
Clients' increased spending on health care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of quality, low-cost supermarkets in my service area (i.e. D&W or Meijer Grocery Store)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inability of clients to travel to low-cost supermarkets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14 About how much (percent) of a decrease in demand for services has your agency experienced over the past year? (Please indicate as a number and do not include the percent sign) For example - if demand for at your agency has decreased by 50% - please indicate with "50".

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Decreased' at question '11 [A13]' (During the past year, has the number of clients you serve:)

Please write your answer here:

15 Do you believe the following reasons are responsible for the decrease in demand at your agency?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Decreased' at question '11 [A13]' (During the past year, has the number of clients you serve:)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Yes	No	Unsure
The increase in SNAP (Food Stamp) Benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More clients are using SNAP (Food Stamp) Benefits in Kent County	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The economy seems to be improving for the clients I serve (i.e. less unemployment)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The extension of jobless benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The overall emergency food system is doing a better job of serving client need in Kent County	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16 In considering your agency's food supplies during the past year, how would you respond to each of the following questions?

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Don't know or not sure
Your agency either ran out of food or worried about running out of food	<input type="radio"/>				
Your agency had to turn clients away or refuse service to them because of lack of food	<input type="radio"/>				
Your agency had to reduce the amount of food provided to clients because of a lack of food supplies	<input type="radio"/>				
You lacked the availability of nutritionally appropriate items for your clients	<input type="radio"/>				
You thought the types of food obtained from Feeding America for your agency may contribute to client obesity and other problems	<input type="radio"/>				
You thought the types of food donated to your agency from retailers (i.e. Meijer or Spartan) may contribute to client obesity and other problems	<input type="radio"/>				
You thought the types of food donated to your agency from restaurants (i.e. Panera) may contribute to client obesity and other problems	<input type="radio"/>				

Gleaning/Purchasing Food

17 Approximately what percentage of food that you provide to your clients comes from Feeding America (formerly known as Second Harvest Gleaners)?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- None
- 1% - 25%
- 26% - 50%
- 51% - 75%
- 76% - 99%
- All or 100%

18 Approximately what percentage of food that you provide to your clients is purchased from retail sources at market price, such as Meijer, Spartan, Gordon Foods, etc?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- None
- 1% - 25%
- 26% - 50%
- 51% - 75%
- 76% - 99%
- All or 100%

19 Approximately what percentage of food that you provide to your clients comes from donated products from a retailer (e.g. Spartan, Panera or manufacturer (e.g. Sara Lee, Kellogg's)?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- None
- 1% - 25%
- 26% - 50%
- 51% - 75%
- 76% - 99%
- All or 100%

20 Approximately what percentage of food that you provide to your clients is collected from food drives?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- None
- 1% - 25%
- 26% - 50%
- 51% - 75%
- 76% - 99%
- All or 100%

21 What types of foods are typically donated (i.e. such as through food drives, donated from retailers or suppliers, etc.) to your agency?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

----- Scenario 1 -----

Answer was 'All or 100%' or '1% - 25%' or '26% - 50%' or '51% - 75%' or '76% - 99%' at question '19 [B3]' (Approximately what percentage of food that you provide to your clients comes from donated products from a retailer (e.g. Spartan, Panera or manufacturer (e.g. Sara Lee, Kellogg's)?)

----- or Scenario 2 -----

Answer was 'All or 100%' or '76% - 99%' or '51% - 75%' or '26% - 50%' or '1% - 25%' at question '20 [B4]' (Approximately what percentage of food that you provide to your clients is collected from food drives?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Yes	No	Unsure
Bread Products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cereal, pasta, and rice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meat, poultry, fish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables, and fruit juice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dry and canned beans, eggs, nuts, peanut butter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Desserts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fats and oils	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spices and condiments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Soft drinks, coffee, tea, and other nonjuice beverages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fresh fruit and vegetables	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dairy products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snack foods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Yes	No	Unsure
Baby food, formula, and nutritional supplements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal care products (diapers, toothpaste, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (not listed)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22 What types of foods could your agency use additional quantities of?

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Yes	No	Unsure
Bread Products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cereal, pasta, and rice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meat, poultry, fish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables, and fruit juice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dry and canned beans, eggs, nuts, peanut butter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Desserts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fats and oils	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spices and condiments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Soft drinks, coffee, tea, and other nonjuice beverages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fresh fruit and vegetables	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dairy products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snack foods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Baby food, formula, and nutritional supplements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal care products (diapers, toothpaste, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (not listed)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23 How would you rate your agency's need for the following items in serving your clients?

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

Critical Much Some Little None - My

	Need	Need	Need	Need	we have sufficient quantities	organization has no ability or capacity to store/handle this type of food
Milk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				
Fresh fruits and vegetables	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				
Dry or canned beans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				
Canned fruits and vegetables	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				
Fresh meat, poultry or fish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				
Cereal, pasta, and rice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				
Canned meats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				
Canned soups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				

24

Please state your agreement with the following questions. (Either "Yes", "No" or "You are unaware of the new service.")

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Yes	No	I am unaware of this service from Feeding Feeding America
My agency's transportation costs have been reduced because of the new Feeding America delivery services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My agency is able to distribute more food because of Feeding America's new delivery service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Representatives from our agency spend less time going to Feeding America because I/we can shop for food and products for my agency online.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My agency is able to purchase greater quantities of meats packaged for individual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Yes	No	I am unaware of this service from Feeding America
consumption from Feeding America because of the new bulk processing facility			

25 Does your organization use mobile pantries from Feeding America?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

26 Please provide your experiences in using mobile pantries from Feeding America.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '25 [B13]' (Does your organization use mobile pantries from Feeding America?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
How would you rate the assortment of food available in the mobile pantries?	<input type="radio"/>				
How would you rate the quality (i.e. freshness, appeal) of the food available in the mobile pantries?	<input type="radio"/>				
How would you rate the overall nutritional value (i.e. healthful) of the foods available in the mobile pantries?	<input type="radio"/>				

27 Please provide your experiences in purchasing food and other products from Feeding America, exclusive of any experiences you've had with mobile pantries.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was '51% - 75%' or '76% - 99%' or 'All or 100%' or '1% - 25%' or '26% - 50%' at question '17 [B1]' (Approximately what percentage of food that you provide to your clients comes from Feeding America (formerly known as Second Harvest Gleaners)?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
How would you rate the assortment of food available at	<input type="radio"/>				

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Feeding America? How would you rate the quality of the food available at Feeding America?	<input type="radio"/>				
How would you rate the overall nutritional value of the food available at Feeding America?	<input type="radio"/>				

Greater Use

28 Which of the following might make you more likely to make greater use of Feeding America?

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Extremely Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Not Very Likely	Not at All Likely
Greater quantities of fresh fruits	<input type="radio"/>				
Greater quantities of fresh vegetables	<input type="radio"/>				
Greater quantities of dairy products	<input type="radio"/>				
Greater availability of purchased products (e.g. 16 oz canned fruits, soup, meats)	<input type="radio"/>				
Greater quantities of 16 oz or less canned fruits at shared maintenance cost (16 cents/lb)	<input type="radio"/>				
Greater quantities of 16 oz or less canned vegetables at shared maintenance cost (16 cents/lb)	<input type="radio"/>				
Greater quantities of 16 oz or less canned soup at shared maintenance cost (16 cents/lb)	<input type="radio"/>				
Greater quantities of 16 oz of frozen meats, prepackaged and ready distribution	<input type="radio"/>				
Increase in delivery services	<input type="radio"/>				
Hours of operation (open evenings and weekends)	<input type="radio"/>				

29 Are any of the following reasons your agency does not utilize or make greater utilization of Feeding America?

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Yes	No
I'm not satisfied with the quantity of food available at Feeding America	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Yes	No
I'm not satisfied with the quality of food available at Feeding America	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The inability to get sufficient quantities of fresh fruits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The inability to get sufficient quantities of fresh vegetables	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The inability to get sufficient quantities of meats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The prices of the purchased products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The inability to get the types of foods requested or needed by the clients of my agency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The inability to get appropriately sized foods (e.g. 16 oz canned goods, 1-2 lb packages of meat, 16 oz boxes of cereal) for easy distribution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The majority of the food available at Feeding America is contributing to the obesity problem in our community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

30 Is your agency affiliated with ACCESS?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

31 Which ACCESS program or services do you participate in?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '30 [C3]' (Is your agency affiliated with ACCESS?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Yes	No
Caseworker services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poverty Simulation Workshops	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Yes	No
Receive referrals from United Way 2-1-1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Report pantry services to Pantry Resource Centers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteer recruitment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food Stamp Outreach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
County Wide Food Drive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Holiday Giving Network	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

32 How satisfied are you with the following services available from ACCESS?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '30 [C3]' (Is your agency affiliated with ACCESS?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	I am not familiar with the ACCESS program or service
Case Worker Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poverty Simulation Workshops	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Countywide Food Drive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteer Recruitment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food Stamp Outreach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training Services Provided by ACCESS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Holiday Giving Network	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

33 Would you like to see ACCESS reactivate the Coop buying group?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '30 [C3]' (Is your agency affiliated with ACCESS?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
 No

34 What additional services or suggestions do you have for ACCESS that could better help your agency achieve its mission?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '30 [C3]' (Is your agency affiliated with ACCESS?)

Please write your answer here:

35 Do you believe there are clients being served by your organization that are eligible, but not enrolled in SNAP or food stamps?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
 No

36 About how many families do you believe are eligible, but not enrolled?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '35 [9b]' (Do you believe there are clients being served by your organization that are eligible, but not enrolled in SNAP or food stamps?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Fewer than 5 families
 6 to 10 families
 11 to 15 families

16 or more families

37 Why do you believe these families are not enrolled SNAP or food stamp benefits?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '35 [9b]' (Do you believe there are clients being served by your organization that are eligible, but not enrolled in SNAP or food stamps?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Yes	No	Unsure
They prefer not to receive SNAP benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are unfamiliar with how to apply for SNAP benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At least one or more of the family members are undocumented and are afraid to seek benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The SNAP application process is too cumbersome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
DHS backlog in approving SNAP applications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is little SNAP outreach in my service area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

38 Finally, is there anything else you would like to tell us that could assist the Essential Needs Task Force in assisting agencies, such as yours, in providing food to the needy in Kent County?

When you complete this questions, hit the "Submit" button to finish the survey.

Please write your answer here: