

Nutrition Standards for the Charitable Food System

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NOPREN Food Security Work Group
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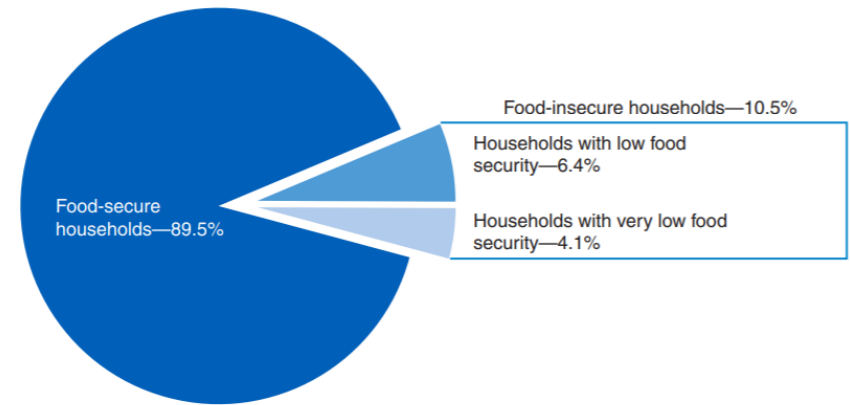


Center for
Vulnerable Populations
Department of Medicine

Background

- People experiencing food insecurity face a number of barriers to healthy dietary intake that exacerbate vulnerability to obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diseases
- Food from food banks & food pantries is an important contributor to dietary intake in many households
- Increasing access to & consumption of healthy foods has become a priority across the charitable food system
 - Nudges
 - Nutrition policies
 - Sourcing strategies
 - Nutrition education
 - Systems to rank food products

Figure 1
U.S. households by food security status, 2019



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

The Feeding America network serves every county in the U.S. through a network of 200 food banks



200 MEMBER
FOOD BANKS

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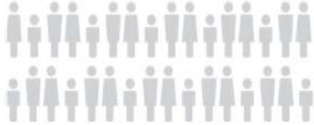
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60K FOOD
PANTRIES
AND MEAL
PROGRAMS

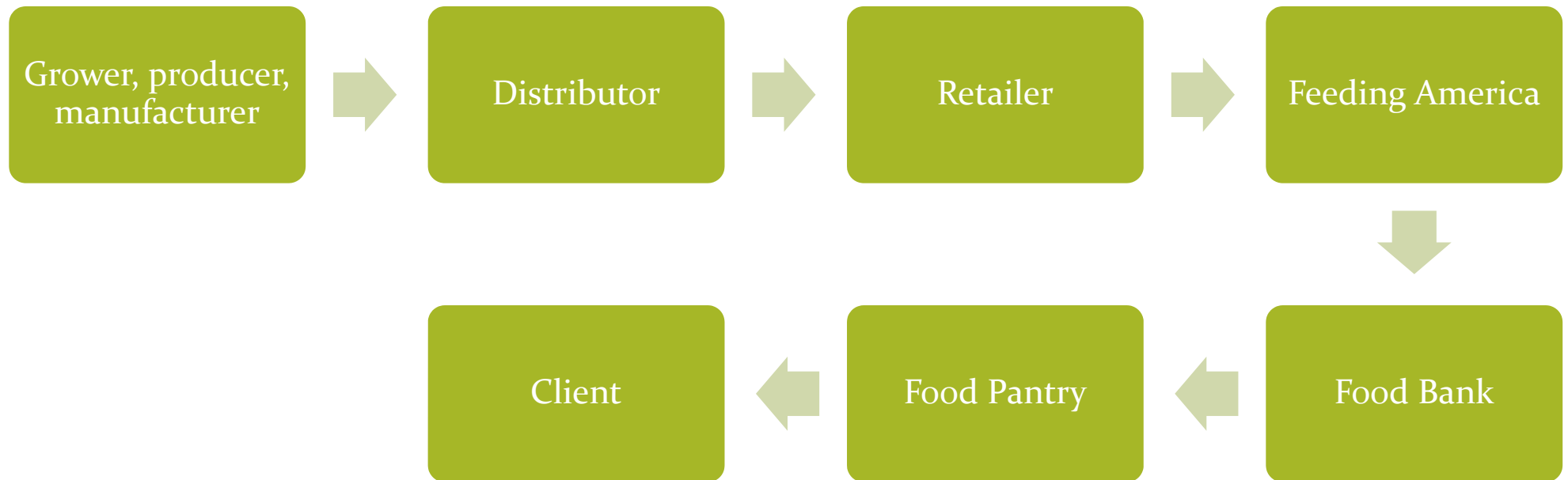
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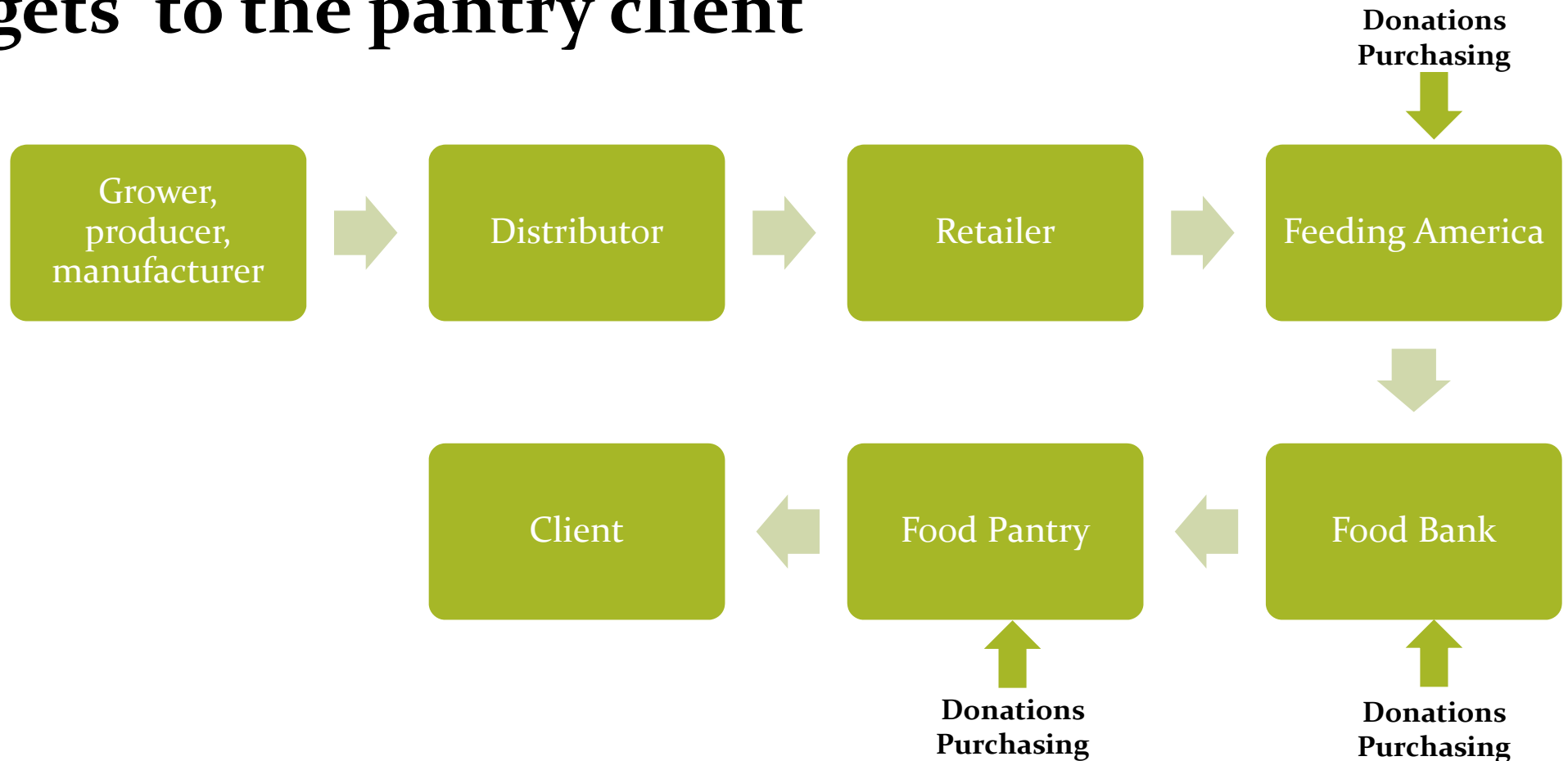
**AMERICANS
SERVED ANNUALLY**



Food can touch many organizations before it gets to the pantry client



Food can touch many organizations before it gets to the pantry client



Where Do Food Banks Typically Receive Their Food?

USDA

- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

Donations: national, regional, state, and local partners

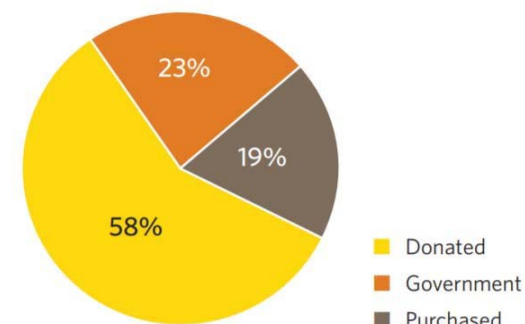
- Relationships with growers, producers, manufacturers, and distributors
- Relationships with retailers
- Other food banks
- Individual donations (e.g. food drives)

Money for food purchases

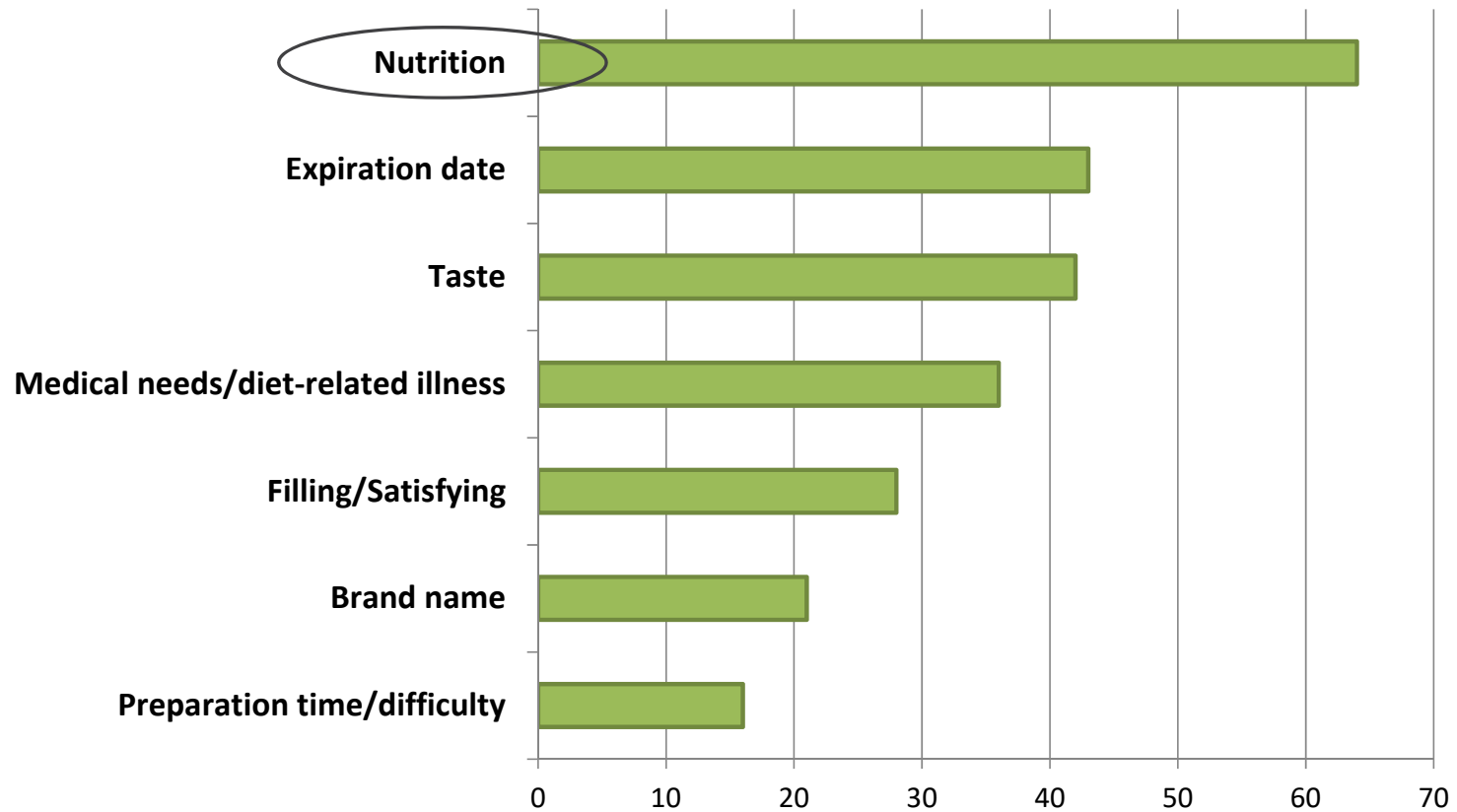
- State and local funds
- Individual donations



Food Bank Inventory
(n=196)



Top reasons why clients (n=230) choose the foods they do at the food pantry



Nutrition policies in food banks



No nutrition goals or policies

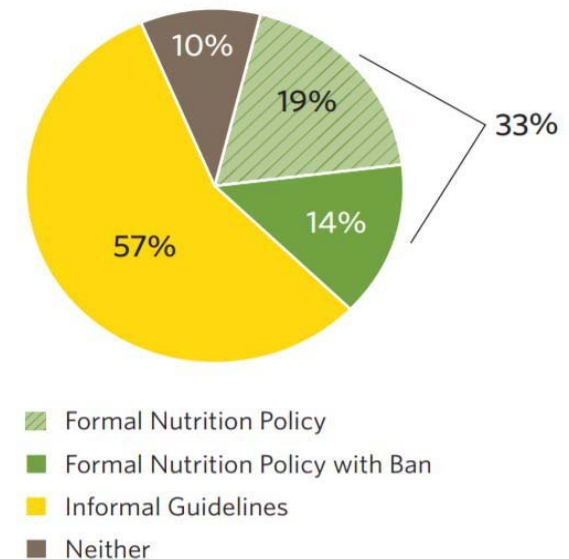
Informal guidelines: operating plan goal for food sourcing

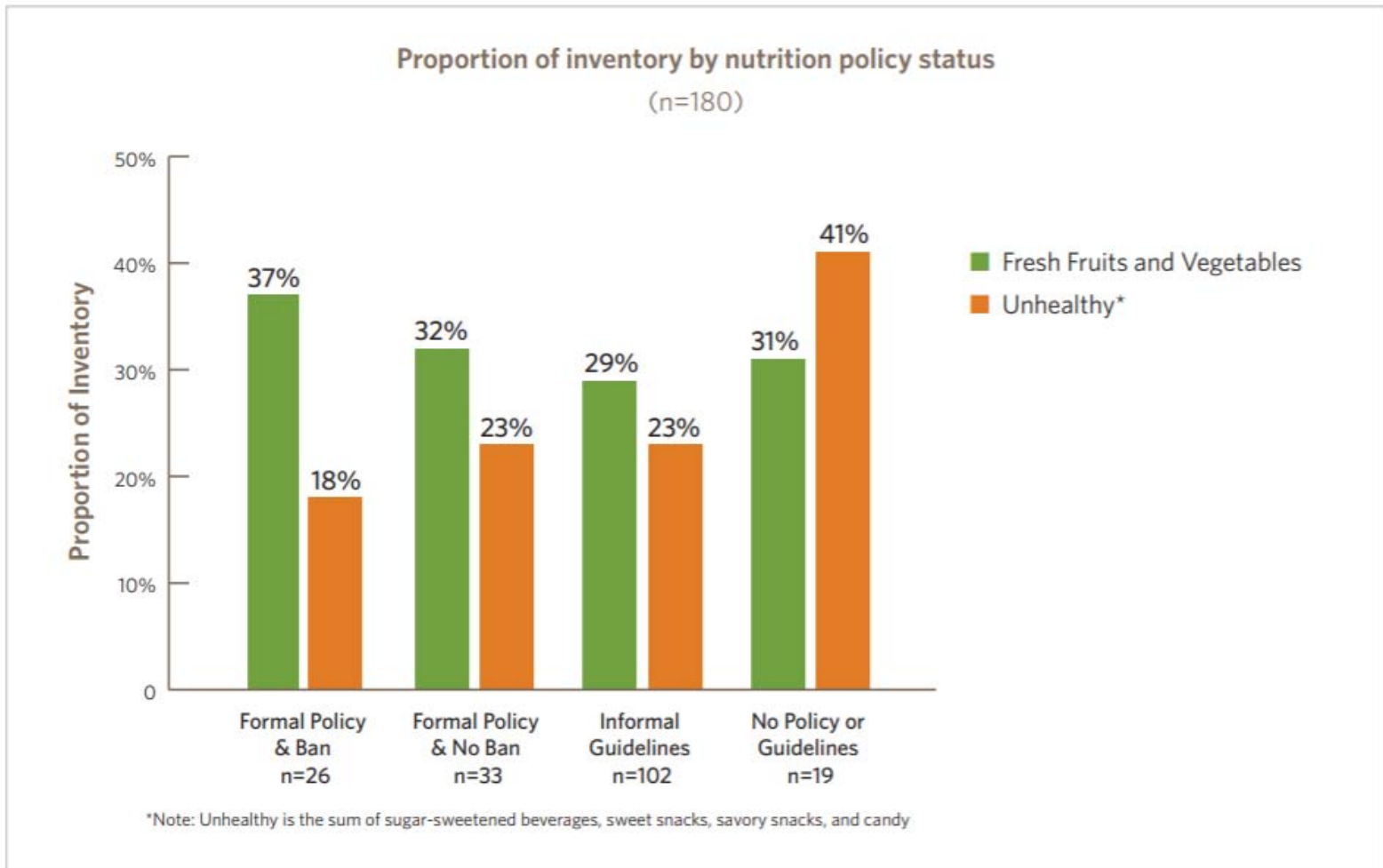
Informal guidelines: Budget resource allocation (staffing & purchasing)

Formal nutrition policy

Formal nutrition policy with ban

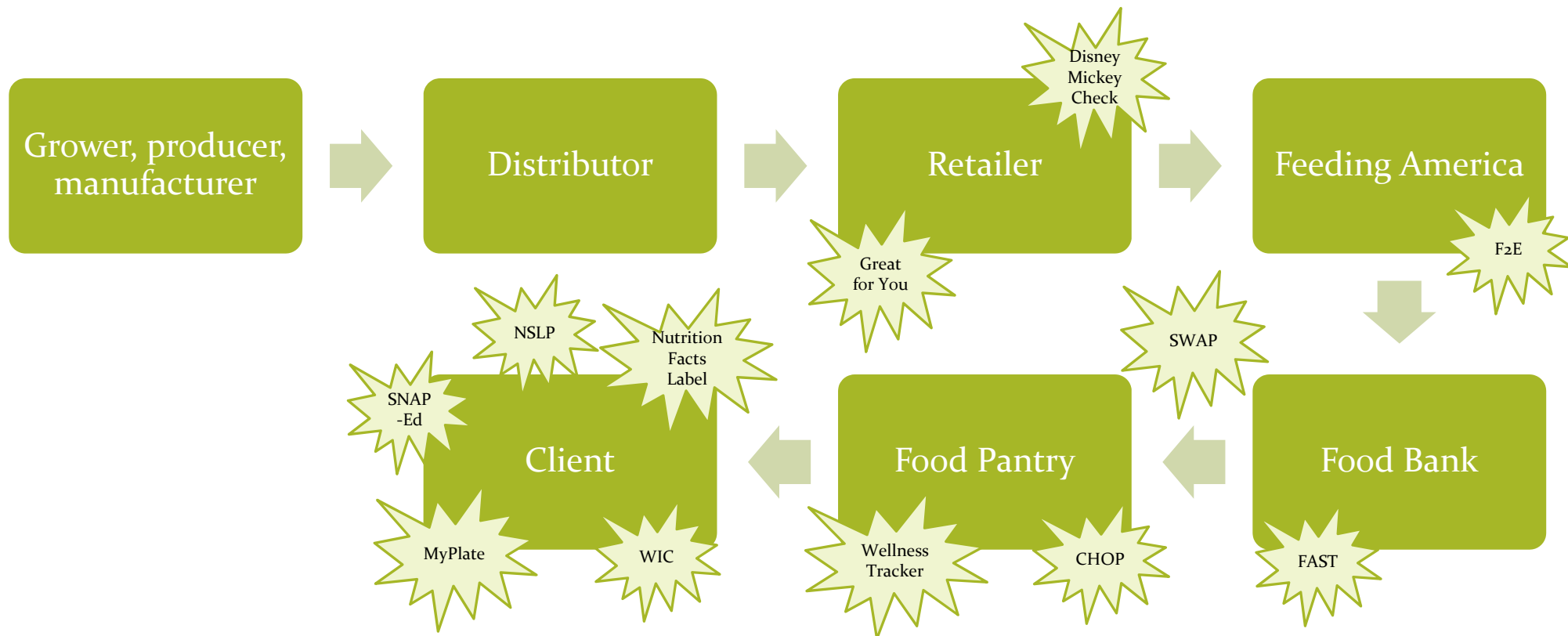
Food Bank Nutrition Policy Status
(n=183)



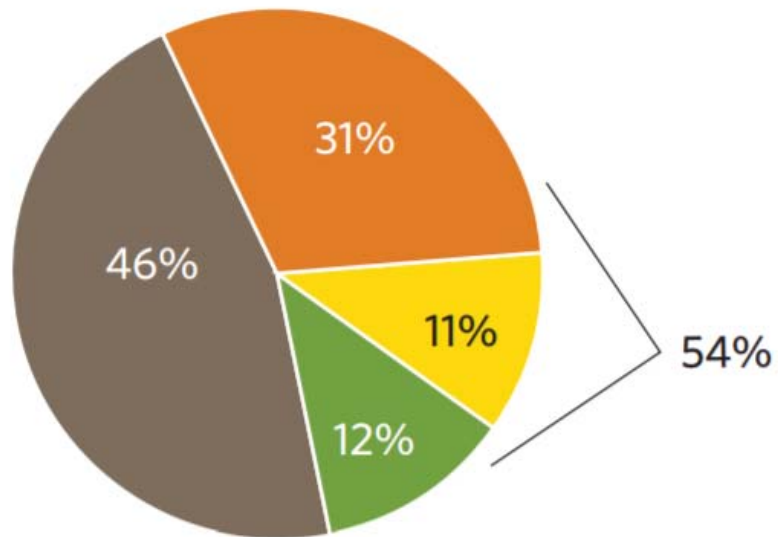


Source: Mazon (2017 survey)

No consensus on what is considered “healthy” in the charitable food system



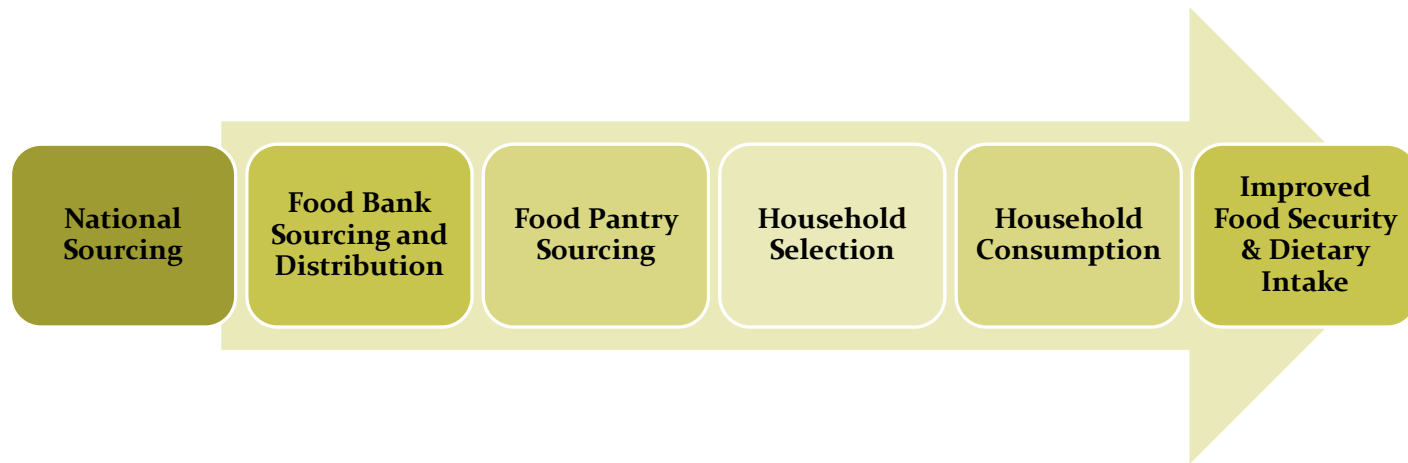
Food bank use of inventory tracking systems
(n=185)



- Foods to Encourage (F2E)
- Choose Healthy Options Program (CHOP)
- Customized tracking system
- Do not currently utilize a system

Food banks are using a variety of systems to track nutritional quality of their inventory

A common definition of “nutritious food” can ensure consistency across a complex continuum



Expert Panel

- Healthy Eating Research, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Convened February 2019
- **14 panel members** with a broad range of expertise
- Panel chairs: Dr. Hilary Seligman and Dr. Marlene Schwartz
- Project manager: Ronli Levi

Goal: to create a common set of evidence-based guidelines tailored to the unique needs and capacity of the charitable food system

Expert Panel

Hilary Seligman, MD, MAS
University of California, San Francisco

Marlene Schwartz, PhD
Rudd Center for Obesity & Food Policy

Gerry Brisson, MA
Gleaners Community Food Bank of
Southeast Michigan

Elizabeth Campbell, MA, RDN
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Gayle Carlson, MAEd
Montana Food Bank Network

Caitlin Caspi, ScD
University of Minnesota

Marla Feldman
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

Tracy Fox, MPH, RD
Food, Nutrition and Policy Consultants,
LLC

Karen Hanner, MM
Feeding America

Amy Headings, PhD, RD, LD
Mid-Ohio Food Bank

Katie Martin, PhD
FoodShare's Institute for Hunger
Research & Solutions

Ami McReynolds, MBA, MS
Feeding America

**Mary Pat Raimondi Bertacchi, MS,
RDN**

Christina Roberto, PhD
University of Pennsylvania

Nancy Roman, MA
Partnership for a Healthier America

Jenna Seymour, PhD
Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention

Mary Story, PhD, RD
Director, HER

Megan Lott, MPH, RDN
Deputy Director, HER

The Challenge

Scientific
Evidence



Complexity of
the Charitable
Food System

Dimensions of Complexity

- Respect and dignity
- Capacity and cost
- Reliance on volunteers
- Use of weight as a metric
- Mixed pallets
- Donor relationships
- Consistent messaging
- Wide range of stakeholders
- Mission to “end hunger” not compatible with limiting access to certain food items
- Preference for slowly changing distribution mix, rather than implementing rigid standards

Adequately flexible to allow for multiple on-ramps, adaptation, and phased implementation depending on local needs

Nutrition Standards: Background

Target audience

- Food banks, food pantries, and other charitable food system stakeholders
- May also guide food donors to supply healthier food choices

Reviewed existing guidelines

- Charitable food system, government, and industry

Anchored in the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

- Consistency of messaging



Nutrition Standards: Process

- Panel met monthly for 60-90 minutes between February 2019-January 2020
- Additional ad hoc meetings held with smaller subcommittees
- Qualtrics surveys completed between meetings to guide decisions and establish consensus

Step 1: Divide food into 11 categories

- Fruits and vegetables
- Grains
- Protein
- Dairy
- Non-Dairy Alternatives
- Beverages
- Mixed dishes
- Processed and packaged snacks
- Desserts
- Condiments and cooking staples
- Miscellaneous

Step 2: Identify key nutrients in 1 serving using Nutrition Facts Label

- Saturated fat
- Sodium (salt)
- Added sugars
 - *Total sugar if added sugar not yet on the label*

Rationale:

- Research consistently links excess consumption with diet-related chronic diseases
- Simplifies implementation
 - Nutrition Facts Label easy to find
 - 1 serving can be read directly off the Label
- Implication: no credit for fortification or “positive nutrients”

Step 3: Rank foods into 3 tiers

- Rank each key nutrient as *Choose Often*, *Choose Sometimes*, or *Choose Rarely*
- Alternative: ●●●, based on local preference
- **Overall product ranking** is lowest tier of any key nutrient

Rationale for three tiers:

- Acknowledges that many foods do not clearly fall into a “healthy” or “unhealthy” category
- Provides food banks with more flexibility

Exceptions

- **Whole Grains:** identify from ingredient list
- **Processed and packaged snacks:** no snacks can be ranked as green or *choose often*
- **Desserts:** all desserts are automatically ranked in the red or *choose rarely*
- **Condiments and cooking staples:** not ranked
- **Miscellaneous foods:** not ranked

Final Recommendations

Nutrition Guidelines for Ranking Charitable Food

Food Category*	Example Products	Choose Often			Choose Sometimes			Choose Rarely		
		Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugar**	Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugar**	Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugar**
Fruits and Vegetables	Fresh, canned, frozen, and dried fruits and vegetables, frozen broccoli with cheese sauce, apple sauce, tomato sauce, 100% juice, 100% fruit popsicle	≤2 g	≤230 mg	0 g	All 100% juice and plain dried fruit			≥2.5 g***	≥480 mg	≥12 g
					≥2.5 g***	231-479 mg	1-11 g			
Grains	Bread, rice, pasta, grains with seasoning mixes	First Ingredient must be whole grain AND meet following thresholds:			≥2.5 g***	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥2.5 g***	≥480 mg	≥12 g
		≤2 g	≤230 mg	≤6 g						
Protein	Animal (beef, pork, poultry, sausage, deli meats, hot dogs, eggs) and plant proteins (nuts, seeds, veggie burgers, soy, beans, peanut butter)	≤2 g	≤230 mg	≤6 g	2.5-4.5 g					
Dairy	Milk, cheese, yogurt	≤3 g	≤230 mg	0 g	3.5-6 g	231-479 mg	1-11 g	≥6.5 g	≥480 mg	≥12 g

Implementation Points:

- Significant alignment with other standards
- Alignment of thresholds across categories simplifies implementation

Table 2: General Rankings of Food Products According to Panel Guidelines

Table 2 depicts how common items typically rank using these guidelines. It is important to note that there will be variation in the ranking of individual products depending on their specific brand formulation. As such, this table does not provide an exact depiction of how all products rank.

Category	Choose Often	Choose Sometimes	Choose Rarely
Fruits and Vegetables	Fresh, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables with no added sugar or sodium; low sodium vegetables; fruit canned in 100% juice or in water	100% juice; fruit canned in light syrup; canned vegetables; plain dried fruit	Dried fruit with sugar added; fruit canned in heavy syrup; tomato sauce with added sugar; vegetables canned with high sodium
Grains	Whole grains (quinoa, brown rice, barley); whole wheat pasta; whole grain breads; whole grain cereal with <6 grams added sugar; plain oatmeal	Refined grain products (white breads, pasta, rice); oatmeal with added sugar; whole or non-whole grain cereal with 7-11 g of total or added sugar	Rice and pasta with salt-based seasoning mixes; whole or non-whole grain cereal with >12 g of sugar
Protein	Dried beans; low-sodium canned beans; some nut butters; nuts; fresh poultry; fish; eggs; tofu; low-sodium canned tuna; canned salmon	Canned beans; baked beans; some nut butters; regular canned fish; pork	Refried beans; deli meat; sausage; bacon; most red meat; breaded chicken
Dairy	Fat-free or low-fat unsweetened yogurt; skim, 1% and 2% milk; fat-free and reduced fat cheeses; light sour cream	Some reduced fat or whole milk cheeses; cottage cheese; whipped cream cheese; whole milk; full-fat sour cream; some low-fat flavored milks; low-fat flavored yogurts	Full-fat cheese and cream cheeses; some low-fat and full-fat flavored milks; some flavored yogurts
Non-Dairy Alternatives	Unsweetened almond, rice, cashew, oat and pea milk; unsweetened soy, almond, rice, cashew and oat milk yogurts; some plain non-dairy alternative products with < 6 g of added sugar	Plant-based cheeses; some flavored soymilks; plain and flavored soy, almond, rice, cashew and oat milk yogurts	Plant-based cream cheese; flavored soy, almond, rice, cashew and oat milk yogurts; plain and flavored coconut milk; flavored soy, almond, rice, cashew, and oat milk
Beverages	Plain water; flavored and unflavored sparkling water; plain coffee; unsweetened tea	Diet soft drinks; diet iced teas; sugar free energy drinks; sparkling water with sodium or added sugar; coconut water	Sweetened energy drinks; sports drinks; regular sodas; non-100% juice drinks with added sugar
Mixed Dishes*	Variability by product formulation is more substantial than other categories	Variability by product formulation is more substantial than other categories	Variability by product formulation is more substantial than other categories
Processed/ Packaged Snacks	None	Plain popcorn; whole wheat crackers; green pea snack crisps; rice cakes; unsalted whole grain pretzels; some snack bars	Pretzels; cheese crackers; potato chips; granola and other snack bars; flavored popcorn
Desserts	None	None	All desserts
Condiments and Cooking Staples	Not ranked		
Miscellaneous products	Not ranked		

General ranking of food products across categories

External Review

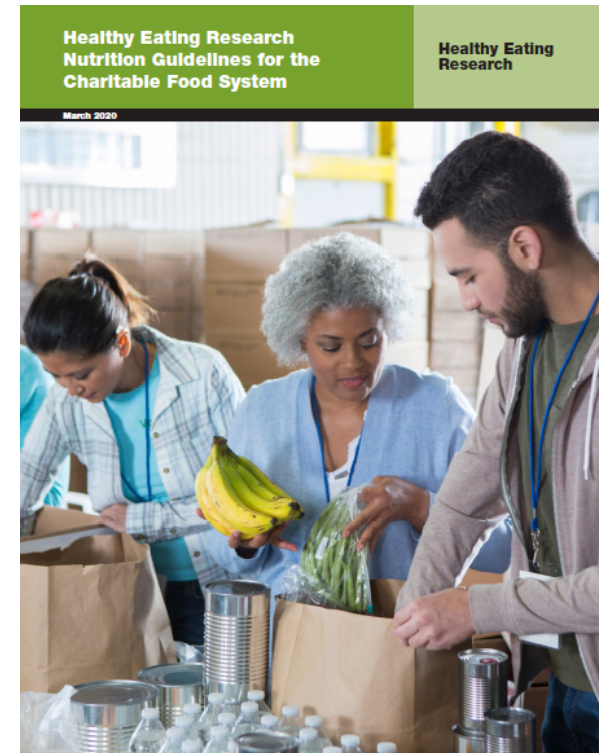
- **Panel of external reviewers provided feedback**
- **Feeding America Nutritious Food Revisioning Task Force**
 - 13 food bank representatives
- **Feeding America voted in March 2020 to update its nutritious food framework (Foods 2 Encourage) to align with these recommendations**
 - Will support food banks interested in adopting guidelines

Implementation Toolkit

- Being developed by Feeding America's Nutritious Food Revisioning Task Force in conjunction with multiple national partners
- One common set of standards may allow for greater peer-learning and reduce need to “re-invent the wheel”
- Network Peer-to-Peer Support

Acknowledgements

- Panel Chairs: Marlene Schwartz and Hilary Seligman
- Feeding America Nutritious Food Revisioning Task Force
- HER: Mary Story, Megan Lott, Kirsten Arm



Thank you! Questions?

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