WSDA thanks everyone who was able to participate in this first COVID-19 weekly check in, especially with short notice. Your time and partnership are valued and appreciated.

In this document, you will find a summary of the stakeholder conversation along with the related action items from this meeting.

Who was invited to this conversation?
- Partner agencies
- Service providers
- Stakeholders

Why did we invite/convene this conversation?
The outbreak of COVID-19 across the state poses great challenges to Washington’s emergency food network and its ability to feed those in need and keep our community safe and healthy. Communication and partnership can help food banks, pantries, and meal programs to better mitigate the challenges that lay ahead.

Objectives for this conversation:
1) Share information
2) Coordinate strategies
3) Identify needs
4) Assess challenges
5) Develop resources

TEFAP intake exemption process

Q: What does the TEFAP waiver process look like, does it go far enough to meet the needs of TEFAP sites in this quickly changing climate?

Mukilteo FB is looking for a TEFAP intake waver.
- Issues associated with accuracy when filling out information for clients – possible language barriers.
- Other issues involve sites wanting to increase social distancing measures for both clients and volunteers, allowing sites to give out food using drive-through or other methods that don’t require data collection and reduce contact.
  - Record only a client count/household size

FLL waiver request
- Remove all requirements
- Numbers and need expected to grow as economic struggles continue

EFN waiver request
- Mirror school lunch waiver request
- Allow drive through without requirements

Short term waiver process that will work for some contractors:
WSDA recommends TEFAP contractors apply for a waiver that allowing volunteers to fill out TEFAP intake form in the client’s behalf. Contractor should email their food assistance point of contact for waiver language and approval for all TEFAP sites in the contractor’s service area.

Follow up:
- ✔ Food Assistance to reach out to USDA seeking expansion of waiver scope.
- ✔ Food Assistance to seek self-declaration “by accepting this box, I am certifying that I am eligible for this program” (or “in need”). Paper in box or sign out front.

Note: After the meeting, the scope of this waiver was greatly expanded. Please contact your TEFAP contractor or food assistance at foodassistance@agr.wa.gov for more information.

EFAP conflict:

Q: Can a waiver be granted to EFAP data collection too?

How will social distancing measures in food pantries affect EFAP? What is allowable?
- EFAP has more flexibility to limit data collection.

Drawbacks:
- Incomplete data during period in which waiver is granted
- Will greatly impact statewide “look” at clients served in closeout report
- Story can still be shown with lbs. of food distributed

Recommendations:
- ✔ Use monthly average of January & February to predict and provide figures for waiver months.
  o Note this in report
- Only use households served and omit client data.

- ✔ WSDA to provide language on their COVID-19 webpage for granting program waivers.
- ✔ WSDA staff to email contractors with waiver language

CSFP

Q: Can a waiver be sought for CSFP client intake?

Same challenges apply as were mentioned in TEFAP.
Just as with TEFAP, contractors should reach out to FA directly for program waivers.
Q: Can a waiver be sought for CSFP proxies?

WSDA will look into this.

✓ WSDA to seek same waiver from USDA for CSFP client intake so as to promote social distancing
✓ WSDA also to look into other ways sites are intending to deliver CSFP boxes (how to check ID, etc.)
✓ WSDA to seek CSFP proxy waiver if applicable.

TMP:

Q: Do TEFAP waivers apply to TMP?
A: Yes, everything that applies to TEFAP, also applies to TMP.

Other programs:

Waivers to FA programs may put other program funding at risk due to noncompliance. Important to check with those programs before implementation of waiver – CDBG for example.

EFN notes that they are actively seeking waivers from other federal agencies and have already received waivers from local funding sources (city).

Other waivers:

Q: Can a waiver be sought for TEFAP/CSFP civil rights trainings?

✓ WSDA to inquire into waiver for civil rights training
✓ WSDA to inquire into waiver for religious organizations to do referrals (in line with social distancing)
✓ WSDA has requested a waiver from USDA for April CSFP surveys. FNS 191 & Nutrition survey

Stakeholder needs and/or immediate assistance:

Q: As the impact of COVID-19 continues to grow, what are specific needs and requests that providers have received or can report?

1. NW Harvest is purchasing handwashing Stations (Rumor or Fact)
   a. Kiki – halfway true. NW Harvest is looking in the purchasing units

Q: Are additional WSDA funds going to be available for bags, boxes, additional staff time associated with changes to distribution and COVID?
1. WSDA is seeking along with partners NW Harvest and Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition access to emergency funds (specifically public health funds) granted by the legislature.
   a. Staff has been in touch with the Governor’s office.
2. WSDA is also working with USDA to limit stresses to the system
   a. Such as implementation of the new SNAP requirements
3. EFAP and TEFAP funds can be used for some of these items.
4. Possible “other” funding for capacity needs.
   a. FA is looking into what expenses are out there as people change their distribution models.

Q: Are other organizations expanding home delivery?

1. VOA has been approached by local government to meet the needs of those who are self-isolating or self-quarantined (confirmed sickness vs possible exposure)
   a. NW Harvest via Katie Rains – expectation that sites will incur expenses related to home delivery.
   b. FLL – volunteer events cancelled. Challenges building 30-50 thousand boxes to meet requests.
      i. Not prepared

Q: Can banana boxes that would otherwise be kept, be given away and not returned?

1. Organizations such as FLL and NW Harvest do not expect sites to send back banana boxes for reuse.

Q: Other specific needs

1. Hand sanitizer
2. Washing stations
3. Cleaning products
4. Disinfectant wipes
5. Plastic repack bags for produce
6. Boxes
7. Bags
8. Money for support staff and transportation costs
9. Food
10. Reverse delivery of boxes (getting boxes back from home delivery clients)

Send needs information to foodassistance@agr.wa.gov

Do NW Harvest and FLL have capacity to redistribute “other items” across the state?

✔ Food Assistance will accept all need requests at foodassistance@agr.wa.gov

Requests/needs communication:
Q: Can a shared list be developed so that organizations can better work together to meet the needs of their clients?

✓ WSDA will work with stakeholders to develop a list of needs

Closures List:

Located on WSDA website https://agr.wa.gov/services/food-access/fa-covid-19
Send closure information to foodassistance@agr.wa.gov

Note: Governor’s declaration does not mean church pantries must close down

Risks:

1. Dwindling volunteer numbers
2. No volunteers
3. Sick staff member
4. Sick staff or volunteers with specialized skills (driver, forklift)
5. Inadequate cash reserves for small organizations in particular
6. Lack of funds for temporary staffing
7. Community center closures – moving to temporary distribution sites
8. Poor messaging or understanding of government directives (church pantries closing)

Things we learned:

- Some waivers can be granted immediately. Other waivers need USDA approval.
- FA is continuously updating their webpage with new and applicable information. https://agr.wa.gov/services/food-access/fa-covid-19
- Lindsey at NW Harvest has rework/repack bags at good prices
- Sharing new procedures or process changes is essential share ideas with foodassistance@agr.wa.gov

Next Steps:

Thank you to all who participated. Below is the to-do check list from the check in meeting. Please contact food assistance with any questions or comments.

✓ Food Assistance to reach out to USDA seeking expansion of waiver scope.
✓ Food Assistance to seek self-declaration “by accepting this box, I am certifying that I am eligible for this program” (or “in need”). Paper in box or sign out front.
✓ WSDA to provide language on their COVID-19 webpage for granting program waivers.
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✓ WSDA also to look into other ways sites are intending to deliver CSFP boxes (how to check ID, etc.)
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