

COVID-19 Check-In Meeting Notes
Tuesday August 11, 2020

Participants: ~76 participants

Agenda

Schedule:

Tuesday – General Focus - Weekly

Updates:

WFC: Trish Twomey

Presentations:

Farm to Freezer Pilot: Mike Cohen, Bellingham Food Bank

Client Intake Phone App: Fay Skaggs, Mobilize US

Q&A:

Your time: New questions, future topics?

Next Mtg:

Tuesday August 18th 9:00 am – Legislative Proposals Stakeholder Meeting

Updates

Trish:

August member news out yesterday, one article was from Susan Shelton from DOH; link to 10 top changes to food banks. Trainings that NWH will be offering. If interested in becoming a flu shot location partnered with Walgreens, let her know. United Healthcare provided social distancing floor markers for indoors or outdoors.

Kim:

Still funds available for the Harvest Against Hunger freezer/refrigerator rebates.

Mike Cohen:

Farm to Freezer Pilot: working with Puget Sound Food Hub on a pilot to purchase produce to distribute through food banks through Whatcom County. They weren't confident they'd get a USDA contract due to their small size. However, they did get USDA funding and have been providing fabulous produce boxes to Whatcom County. In partnership with WSDA, that's where Farm to Freezer was born.

Overview:

- The Farm to Freezer Program is a collaboration between the Bellingham Food Bank (BFB) and the Bellingham Public Schools (BPS) Central Kitchen to:
 - Build long-term continuity and resiliency of food supply
 - Support resiliency in our local farming sector
 - Provide a pipeline of high quality meals for local feeding organizations
 - Maximize utilization of the Bellingham Public Schools (BPS) Central Kitchen. The BPS kitchen has the capacity to process and freeze over 12,000 quarts of food per month.
- BFB and BPS ran a “Test Fire” of the program June 3-4 to refine cost estimates, assess logistical, labor and other constraints.
- The larger effort commenced at the end of June and will continue through the end of the local farm growing season in November.
- Initial Funding (up to \$600,000) will come from Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). Projected budget is \$552,009
- Partners include:
 - All regional Food Banks
 - Council on Aging/ Meals on Wheels
 - County-wide Public Schools
 - Opportunity Council
 - Miracle Food Network
 - YMCA and other childcare centers

Components:

- The Farm to Freezer Program encompasses the following:
 - Procurement
 - Procuring fresh farm produce from local farms experiencing excess supply due to restaurant closures and curtailment of farmer’s markets
 - Priority sourcing from underserved and BIPOC farmers
 - Processing & Meal Prep
 - To process this fresh produce into QUART sized frozen meals (soups, stews, etc.) and PINT sized sauces
 - Distribution, Coordination and Food Banking
 - This food can be stored for future emergencies or delivered to vulnerable populations through local feeding organizations (not just BFB).
 - The plan is to store this food until January 2020 and then begin distribution in Q1 and Q2 of 2020 when fresh farm produce is in limited supply regionally

Procurement:

GOAL

- To support the local economy and local farmers by establishing a procurement pipeline for fresh farm produce

CONCEPT

- To procure fresh farm produce from local farms experiencing excess supply due to restaurant closures and curtailment of farmer's markets

ONGOING/NEXT STEPS

- We are currently working on:
- Completing berry sauce-making from farms with highly perishable products without markets
- Recipe development for savory soups
- Schedule building as schools navigate fall schedules and remote learning

Partners include:

- Bellingham Food Bank as lead organization on funding, procurement, and logistics
- BPS as processing partner/ key early coordination on recipe development
- Puget Sound Food HUB support for distribution and logistics
- WCF in supporting role for funding and strategy

Processing and Meal Prep:

GOAL

- To maximize utilization of the BPS Central Kitchen to produce high quality quart-sized meals which can be frozen and delivered to vulnerable populations or stored for future emergencies

CONCEPT

- The BPS Central Kitchen is a world-class facility with the capacity for making more than 12,000 quarts of scratch-cooked meals from locally sourced ingredients
- The Kitchen has been underutilized this summer (June/July/August) when fresh produce is available and was enabled to support food resiliency efforts in Whatcom County
- There is a tremendous potential to make this program a more permanent part of food resiliency planning in the region by finding longer term funding sources and working through the logistics of using the BPS Kitchen during the school year

Partners include:

- Bellingham Public Schools as the LEAD partner for Processing & Meal Prep
- BFB will serve as overall project lead on identifying and securing produce
- Claire in the chat box: Has Bellingham SD staff talked to other school nutrition directors about this project?

- Mike: they've talked a little bit to some other nutrition directors. We're lucky to have a lead chef who can help and offer their kitchen for large amounts of batch cooking and cooling safely.
- Nichole in the chat box: Curious how you are labeling these foods?
 - Mike: the name of the soup or sauce and ingredients. Following the health department guidelines on listing ingredients.
- Claire in the chat box: opportunities for combining this type of program with SNAP Ed?
 - Mike: I'd love to hear ideas on how we could leverage this to work with SNAP Ed. Demos to do different soups and sauces?
 - Claire: having conversations with your SNAP Ed folks as this would be right up their alley.
- Kim: part of our contract with BFB was not just for the Farm to Freezer development of soups and sauces but it was also to develop a one-page project summary when this is done that Mike can share about this project. There are pieces that could be possibly replicated, so Mike will share this in Nov or Dec with the group.

Mobilize US – *Full slide presentation with images of their app and example training videos included in the presentation for today.*

Jade and Fay: been in business for over 15 years. When COVID happened, there was an increase in demand, the state of Colorado reached out to them for the possibility to partner to increase safety and access to data. They've been working with CDHS along with several states and Houston Food Bank. If you have a phone on you, you can text FOODWA to 94502 for an example survey/demonstration.

Goal is to solve for:

High volume distribution, limit 1:1 contact, social distancing

Agencies/State collecting information from six feet away being time-consuming.

Logistics Overview:

- Cones for lines of cars
- Welcome sign - when the client gets to this sign, the client will text your keyword, to 94502 (*put your car in park, or have a passenger text*)
- The client will receive a text with a link to complete the survey unique to the user. Subsequent visits will pre-load their information and asks for verification.
- When the client submits the completed form, they will receive a screen to show the distribution site to verify their application. Possible to get a confirmation text as well.

- Surveys are fully customizable; they're client and location specific. They have all the TEFAP information, but other questions can be added too.
- In the survey overview, you can view the data, edit surveys, manage questions, etc.
- Data can be exported and/or integrated into other systems via an API.
- Can build in eligibility questions if applicable.

Comments on Mobile US:

Is the app free and all messages sent free?

- It is free for clients, but there is a cost to utilize this program from the food bank side.

What is the cost based on?

- Based on volume, the higher the volume, the lower the cost per client.

How is the data stored?

- Stored in their database, they work with the US Air Force and have a very secure system. You can export the data out. Can be linked up with Link2Feed

Who owns the data?

- The data is stored in their system, but you would own your data. We don't sell data or share information at all. Requests for data would go to the client, they wouldn't release that information.

Do you have the option to expand eligibility for check in so if a client isn't TEFAP eligible but able to receive other donated food can this be accommodated in the program?

- Absolutely. Even if you're not TEFAP eligible, those questions can be customized for every program.

Any chance the system can be incorporated to have clients make reservations?

- Yes, some are already doing it that way.

Does that app collect signatures?

- Only digital signatures.

General Comments

Stephanie: they've been using a phone app through Google Forms for clients to check in, it's free, just have to purchase a thermoscan POS machine and paper rolls. Does not have texting or memory ability.

Michelle: Speaking of the waiver for Covid. Can you give an update on where we are at? I missed the last meeting. thanks,

Kim: the DHD waiver did not go through. Closing out those reports. Transition will take time, but the goal is to go back to collecting what is required for the program.

Claire: are there other states that still have a DHD waiver?

Kim: not that I'm aware of, but USDA said they were no longer granting extensions nationwide.

Claire: will next week's meeting also include the WSDA budget cut scenarios in current fiscal year if that's what's called for?

Kim: I can put that out at a high level. We've already submitted our packages ~ a month ago.

Closing remarks:

Kim: would love for all of you to be a part of next Tuesday's meeting, focusing on the Legislative Proposals at the state level. Other state agencies have been invited, our Director will be there, agency requests, our specific request, etc. Thank you to you all!