General Focus Meeting Notes | 4.19.2022

Participants: ~63

Agenda

Schedule: Tuesday – General Focus Meeting – Once per Month

Updates:
  - Washington Food Coalition – Trish Twomey
  - Harvest Against Hunger – David Bobanick
  - Advocacy Update – Aaron Czyzewski, Christina Wong, Claire Lane
  - WSDA Focus on Food & We Feed WA – Katie Rains

FA Updates:
  - Staff Updates; Reviews (monitoring); SOS/SAM Reminders; Resiliency Grants – Applications Open on April 18, 2022; Food Updates; Budgets; Next Biennium; Other?

Input:
  - Questions? Sharing? How’s it going? FAAC?

Next Mtgs.:
  - Thurs. & Fri: April 20-21 – WFC Conference
  - Friday: May 6, 9:00am – Contractor Only
  - Tuesday: May 17, 9:00am – General Check-In Meeting (NWH Update 😊)

Updates

• Harvest Against Hunger (HAH) – David Bobanick (david@harvestagainsthunger.org)
  o Resiliency Grants – our Small Capacity Applications opened yesterday morning.
  o Farm to Community – wrapping up contracting for current year in Farm to Food Pantry. Working on next version of the annual Farm to Food Pantry report, which should be available soon. Farm to Food Bank: have supplies & materials being sorted today, which will be distributed to those participating in the F2FB activity.
  o The Computers for Food Bank program is back up and running. (All hunger relief groups and programs are welcome to apply for those.) David has 11-12 in the office and will bring some to the WFC conference later this week. If you’d like to pick up a computer at the conference, fill out the form and send it to David via email.
    ▪ Yamila Sterling: Seattle Food Banks, Solid Ground (Yamila & Emily) will be attending the WFC Conference. Following up David’s report on having available laptops let FSS know if you need one but are not available to go to the Conference. David: We only have desktops for now – we may be able to find laptops (working on that now).
    ▪ Michelle Douglas: Pierce County EFN partners, we too will be at the conference. Please let us know if you need us to pick up computers.
  o Capacity Survey – HAH is going to be partnering with University of Washington’s Department of Health to do some follow-up work. They’ll be potentially connecting with groups that participated in last year’s survey (to clarify or get additional data) over the next 5-6 months.
  o VISTA positions – continuing to look for sites we can place the Harvest VISTA next year (focus on capacity building projects). Summer VISTA Associate Program: sites have been finalized, we should be able to post opportunities in the next few days.
  o WFC Conference – will be moderating a session on new partnerships with local growers & other groups (Thurs, 3-4:30pm, Harvest Blossom room). Immediately following that session, a group of organizations are going to meet to discuss an opportunity to build a more formalized a WA-based gleaning network. If you’re interested, please join us.
• WA Hunger Distribution Center workgroup calls – 2nd Wednesday morning each month, is a place to discuss distribution-center level opportunities & challenges. Email David if you’re interested in joining in!

• We Feed WA & WSDA Focus on Food – Katie Rains
  o We Feed WA – we were able to post the RFP for year 2 yesterday. (We Feed WA is a pilot food program, a state alternative to the federal Farmers to Families food box program.) Year 2 has had a few refinements, based on our lessons learned from previous contracts. There’s about $22 million earmarked for fresh boxes. In addition to those fresh boxes, there are opportunities for businesses to bid on other combination boxes, to provide supplemental culturally relevant foods, logistical support, and/or technical assistance to both food business and hunger-relief organizations in navigating opportunities like this. We will be having some Q&A calls, one later this week & one next week.
    ▪ To access the RFP on WEBS, register & then select “Agriculture, Department of” from the drop down. It will also be on the We Feed WA webpage later today.
    ▪ If you’re not sure if you’ll be receiving fresh boxes through We Feed WA, please reach out to Jessica at wefeedwa@agr.wa.gov. When we have vendors selected for the boxes, we’ll be in touch again. (Note: these are different produce boxes than the TEFAP fresh produce boxes.)

  o WSDA Focus on Food Initiative – we are still proceeding with the USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement. It’s another way to support our hunger relief organizations and do some direct procurement. A significant portion will be earmarked through Food Assistance and will operate by allocation through Kim and her team. Plenty of communication has been going on recently. We look forward to getting that submitted and will have some report backs on that probably next month.

• WA Food Coalition – Trish Twomey
  o Conference this week (Thursday & Friday) in Wenatchee. I’m still taking registrations through today for the conference. You are welcome to come! We are excited to be honoring the National Guard at lunch on Thursday.

• Advocacy – Christina Wong, Claire Lane, Aaron Czyzewski
  o Please talk with your congressional members about child nutrition programs.
    ▪ The waiver authority for USDA to grant flexibilities for schools & community-based organizations to deal with supply chain issues and to get meals to kids is expiring June 30. Those are the waivers that are allowing schools to do universal free meals & allowing summer meal sites to be hosted anywhere. There are a couple of bills that would extend that waiver authority for another year. The Senate vehicle is where they’re seeing the obstruction around a vote right now.
    ▪ If the waiver can’t get extended, how can we mitigate the impact? Expand community eligibility provisions and expanding the summer EBT program.
    ▪ Link to emails from FRAC that you can send to congressional members. If you’re interested in writing an opinion piece (especially in Yakima, Spokane, SW WA areas) we’d love to help you with that.
    ▪ Recent data still shows record numbers of food hardship for families with children: 1 in 4 couldn’t afford enough food for their families as of Feb 2022 (article).

  o Public Charge: Immigrants have been refusing to use services that they are lawfully able to use as a result of the confusing Public Charge rule. The rule was rescinded. The Department of Homeland Security issued a new rule that reiterates that SNAP, Medicaid, & housing programs are not taken into consideration in the public charge test. On April 21 you can sign onto a comment developed by the Protecting Immigrant Families campaign.
- Claire encouraged folks to sign up to be a sponsor for summer meals and to think strategically about where the needs are in their community. For more info, contact Claire.lane2@gmail.com
- Aaron shared about the April 22 deadline for a TEFAP Dear Colleague letter. The letter is in support of full funding for TEFAP storage and distribution ($100 million), plus $15 million for infrastructure grants. Please include this in your conversations with congressional members.

### Food Assistance Updates

- **Staff updates (Kim Eads)**
  - Sending all our best to Nichole Garden! She will be moving over to OSPI. We’re working on a transition plan, but in the meantime please direct questions (re: Farm to Food Pantry, Farm to Food Bank, Cook WA) to Patrick.Merscher@agr.wa.gov.
  - Welcome Dana Mckeon! She has a Business Communications degree and some banking in her past. She will be joining Lindsey Robinson’s team working on the Resiliency Grants.

- **Friendly Reminders (Heidi Cobun)**
  - FA Monitoring Reviews: each year our team reviews at least 20 subcontractors, and those reviews are scheduled in advance & must be completed by Sept 30. If we will be visiting your agency this summer, we’ll be reaching out to you with more information.
  - WA Secretary of State (SOS) – Renewal Delays: SOS is making changes to their online filing process for nonprofits to reflect changes to nonprofit corporation laws under RCW 24.03A (the new laws went into effect Jan 1, 2022). Anyone needing to file during this time will need to use paper and should expect delays (up to 30 days).
    - David Bobanick: Those changes apply primarily to membership organizations, but are worth reviewing with your BOD Secretary.
    - Missy Belles: idea to send paper WA State filing certified mail
  - System for Award Management (SAM): Pretty much everyone needs to be registered with SAM these days, and renewal isn’t automatic. If you registered with SAM for the first time this last year, it may be time to renew. Registering with SAM.gov is free! There are companies out there that offer to do it for you, but it’s very expensive. If you need help, reach out to your contractor. Also, if your registration is marked “private”, other entities (like your contractor & FA) will not be able to verify your Active status.
    - Mike Cohen: You need to be registered for SAM for either of the new WSDA grant opportunities yes? Kim: Yes.
    - David Bobanick: Keep an eye out for what look to be "official" SAM registration emails within 90 days of renewal. Those offers are to register your organization for the "low" cost of $400. SAM registration is free!
    - Nichole Garden: Lots of scammers out there.
    - Missy Belles: For us as a funder, we use the WA State reporting as a requirement to get funding
    - Nichole Garden: If you need help with SAM call the Federal Help desk.

- **Resiliency Grants (Lindsey Robinson)**
  - Applications for Resiliency Grants – Round 2 are now open! We are excited to have more funding available this year (anticipate $16 million or more). With this increased level of funding, it is a more thorough in-depth application. Active SAM, Unique Entity ID (previously DUNS), and Secretary of State are required.
  - Eligibility: Hunger relief organizations that have existed for 12+ consecutive months, tribes, tribal organizations, & other 501(c) non-profit organizations providing hunger relief, and there can be other public corporations, commissions, and authorities. (See website for complete info.)
Funding priorities include: recommendations of the Capacity Survey & Report (HAH, UW, WSDA); BIPOC-led organizations & organizations with BIPOC-strong partnerships; rural, less dense regions and underserved communities; statewide representation.

- **Funding objectives (categories):**
  - Collaborations - to implement and/or strengthen regional systems; may include new county partnerships, interregional collaboration, and food hubs.
  - Local purchasing projects – to strengthen local systems, invest in local businesses & local agriculture.
  - Service operation efficiencies & expanded capacity projects – to support staffing, equipment, capital improvement projects, and other vital resources needed to continue and expand services as needed.
  - Client experience enhancement – increased access to culturally relevant foods, grocery model, translation, etc.

- **Funds will be awarded under the following categories:**
  - **Equipment & installation** costs up to $4,999.99 – through partnership with Harvest Against Hunger. Up to $400,000 worth of eligible projects will be funded.
  - At least 30% of awarded projects will be to hunger relief organizations who participate in WSDA Food Assistance programs (contracted organizations).
  - At least 20% of awards will be to organizations qualifying as Regional Distribution Organizations (RDOs) with projects related to those functions (see definitions).
  - At least 30% of awarded projects will be to hunger relief organizations who do not currently participate in WSDA Food Assistance programs.

- **Award Sizes:**
  - Up to $4,999.99 for equipment & installation costs only in partnership with HAH.
  - Over $5,000 with no maximum limit

- **Translation:** Overview and application guide will be available in multiple languages (Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Ukrainian, Somali, Korean, Chinese Mandarin, Tagalog)

- **Timeline:**
  - June 10: Applications due.
  - June 10-30: Review & selection period; finalization of grant awards; notifications.
  - July 1-8: Contracts sent out pending finalization of grant awards.

- **Questions:**
  - Mike Cohen: Is “local” defined in the information related to this grant. If so I missed it when reading it yesterday. Claire Lane: The legislation may reference “WA grown”. Lindsey: we don’t currently have a specific definition of “local”. There are certain things that make local purchasing impactful and effective. Certainly WA-grown and supportive of your region.
  - Missy Belles: Are funds being awarded directly to food banks or via contractors? Lindsey: these would be awarded directly to organizations, not via contractors.
  - Alan Walker: Can you clarify project “completed”, if funds are used for a specific portion of a project, but the entire project is not completed by June 30, 2023 is this allowed? Lindsey: if we’re paying for a portion of a project, then that would be the portion we’d be concerned with. There won’t be any opportunity to roll over funds beyond June 30.
  - Mikel Priddy: Is there a standard location for the meeting notes and recordings I can guide our subcontractors to? Lindsey: If you are referring to the Resiliency Grants, there will be links to the recordings on the website.
  - Angie Wood: Could we get copies of these two slides? It would be helpful in communicating what our food bank is facing in terms of need for funds. Lindsey: Here is
the link to these FA Focus Meeting presentations & minutes: https://agr.wa.gov/services/food-access/fa-covid-19

- Info Sessions (45 min) will be happening at 11 am on: April 21, May 5, May 19, June 2. Meeting link. These sessions will be hosted in English. To arrange technical assistance in Spanish or another language, please email foodassistancegrants@agr.wa.gov.
  - Mike Cohen: Can you post the info Q & A call times on the website? Lindsey: Yes! They are listed on the website, in the “Contact and Technical Assistance” section.

- Food Updates (James Scovel, JScovel@agr.wa.gov)
  - Number of Loads & Cancelled Orders – 739 current orders for the year (2022), and 143 cancelled loads for the year (which is 19% of loads).
  - Average Price Per Pound is $1.42/pound in 2022. This means we’re spending more money for less food. This has been happening over time, but spiked in 2021 and 2022. We’ll be spending $1.7-1.8 million for entitlement food orders (Oct-Dec). There will be a food ordering workgroup in May where we’ll talk more about that.
  - Yearly Entitlement Fruit & Veggie Orders – we ordered fruit & vegetables (canned & frozen) for the upcoming year based on votes from the Food Order Work Group. All the vegetables are low-sodium and the fruits are light or packed in water. The frozen vegetables have no sodium.
  - July – Dec TEFAP was ordered & a lot of products are coming. See slide deck for product list, number of trucks, & requested delivery dates. Note: can tuna was moved from July to Oct.
    - Mixed produce TEFAP boxes will start in August and go through December. For Aug-Oct you’ll receive two deliveries/month. For Nov-Dec, you’ll receive one delivery/month.
    - Oct-Nov is where we’ll be spending the $1.7-1.8 million for entitlement. (Note: the slide is not exhaustive, but shows what we currently have ordered for that period.)
  - TEFAP Bonus Food Offering – WA Fair Share: these have to be ordered by the end of this week. This includes fresh peaches, nectarines, and plums for summer (June – August) and more.

- TEFAP Forecasting (Kim Eads)
  - Almost all of you are impacted directly, or indirectly, by what the future looks like for TEFAP (a federal program). We have base TEFAP Operational Funds, which doesn’t change much year to year (dark gray), even though the level of food (gold bars) fluctuates greatly. This is important because from a distributor standpoint, it costs money to issue food. The light gray area represents additional funds TEFAP received due to COVID support or the Trade Mitigation Program (TMP ended in 2020). So, we are really concerned with what the future looks like and the level of food. As James mentioned, food costs are rising and we don’t anticipate that will go away. (Feeding America put out an article recently stating food costs have risen 40%).

![TEFAP Funds, Food Value and Clients](image-url)
o For FFY2022, at the federal level, funding went back to its more traditional level of support (around $79.6 million). As Aaron discussed earlier, there are proposals for $100 million. Last year Feeding America and others voiced that the need is greater than increasing TEFAP's base level (i.e. national total) to $100 million. Our percent of the pie has decreased, which in a way is good (because it’s based on poverty & unemployment). However, it’s going to be difficult to maintain operations. Our cost for storage and distribution have almost tripled.

o Resiliency Grants could help in FF22. Be thinking what funding you can push out, what you can stretch, based on the timeline of those individual grants. As we head into the next biennium, we’ve been working as an agency to develop strategies to meet the challenges ahead.

o The blue line represents the total number of clients coming into food banks. With COVID there’s a dramatic increase, then some leveling off, but we’re hearing that’s starting to climb again. The projections for clients on this chart shows a 20% increase. If you have any projections for your area, please share those. That will help us do more detailed projections.
  - Mike Cohen: Since the end of pandemic benefits for families combined with the current inflation rates, many are seeing quick growth in shoppers’ visits.
  - Claire Lane: It’s also good to remember that TEFAP is governed by the Farm Bill, which will be renewed in 2023. Kim: Yes, the Farm Bill is critical. A lot of the food we’re getting now is Bonus, and that typically shows up in the Farm Bill. The issue is that it doesn’t carry with it operational funding. We’re having those conversations, but also don’t want USDA to create new & separate grant funding (it’s hard administratively to manage).
  - Stacey Crnich: We are at a 40% increase in East Pierce County.
  - Jose: I don’t have numbers now but do you want the trend emailed to you? Kim: Email is great (KEads@agr.wa.gov).
  - Michelle Douglas: EFN can send you new data points. We saw a dramatic increase in the first quarter especially March. March for us was up 52% over our March 2019 numbers. Highest March we have on record including the height of the pandemic.
  - Angie Wood: We had a huge increase in March over Feb (about 1700 additional visits across all streams of service)
  - Mike Cohen: Similar to what Stacey says. 100% increase from Feb 2020 to March 2022.

Next Meetings

Thurs. & Fri: April 20-21 – WFC Conference
Friday: May 6, 9:00am – Contractor Only
Tuesday: May 17, 9:00am – General Check-In Meeting (NWH Update 😊)