

Franklin Food Pantry Client Needs Assessment

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Executive Summary

Why?

One in three adults in Massachusetts experienced food insecurity at some point during 2021¹. While Franklin, MA is considered an idyllic residential setting, it is not immune from poverty and food insecurity. The Client Needs Assessment was created to ascertain if FFP is impacting those who need it most and to inform appropriate programming in the future.

Who?

Franklin Food Pantry (FFP) endeavors to build a community in which everyone in need has an improved quality of life through nutritious food and supportive resources. FFP has existed for 35 years because there is true need in our community. In FY21, FFP offered supplemental food assistance and household necessities to over 474 households.

How?

To comprehensively evaluate our clients' needs, we reviewed expert literature on the topic of food insecurity, as well as conducted primary research and assessed third party data sources. These findings were evaluated in the context of our annual report and strategic plan. Taken together, the research suggests several operational and programming considerations. Highlights include:

- ✓ Surveys illustrated that our clients want more consistent access to fresh produce.
- ✓ Statistics showed many more households in Franklin are eligible for SNAP benefits than are receiving them. There are also many more households receiving SNAP than are coming to the pantry.

Recommendations

These following recommendations are supported in detail in their respective sections. Additional information can be found in the Appendices.

Community Awareness

- Increase community awareness of the extent of food insecurity through a variety of FFP communications, including partner communication outlets
- Increase community knowledge of available resources for those experiencing food insecurity through a variety of methods
- Educate the community about what we do and the services we provide
- Focus concerted effort on sharing information with other emergency food agencies in our area, including schools, churches, emergency responders, Franklin Housing Authority, etc.
- Conduct presentations at the Senior Center and other local human service agencies to widen awareness of services we offer

Nutrition

- Develop new programs and collaborations for special dietary needs (gluten-free, diabetic, heart healthy etc.)
- Expand frozen produce options for our clients

¹ [Opportunities to Improve Food Equity and Access in Massachusetts: A Report by The Greater Boston Food Bank \(Edited 6/3/22\)](#) .

- Increase sensitivity to diverse cultural differences, dietary restrictions, and expand translation services

Community Garden

- Open communication with area farms ahead of spring 2022 around the ability and interest to accept SNAP
- Work with Franklin Farmer's Market to encourage local farms to participate in Healthy Incentives Program
- Expand the FFP Community Garden program
- Explore additional partnerships with fresh food providers

Partnerships, Programs and Wrap Around Services

- Consider expanding client office hours to facilitate referral to agencies addressing specific needs
- Provide more information regarding SNAP qualification and application process
- Offer enrollment assistance for public programs and check in with clients about which resources they want
- Secure space for confidential client conversations
- Raise awareness of other food resource options available to our clients in Franklin (e.g., Meals on Wheels, Senior Center, St. Vincent de Paul, Farmer's Market vendors that accept SNAP)
- Expand opportunities posted on Job Board located in Pantry; solicit available openings from the community
- Provide periodic job assistance trainings/workshops
- Develop relationship with local health care providers to spread awareness of what FFP offers as well as understand and better accommodate concomitant health needs of clients
- Evaluate the demand for and feasibility of expanding in person shopping times/days
- Continue and expand collaboration with fellow agencies to expand our collective impact
- Coordinate outreach to Friends of Franklin clients about FFP services given its closing in 2021

Youth Programs

- Evaluate bigger bags for Weekend Backpack and Kid's Bags for those weeks covering school vacations
- Investigate summer food programs for children
- Pursue Weekend Backpack expansion into Franklin High School
- Provide more information to our clients about the Weekend Backpack program as well as educate the community about the program and its benefits to increase enrollment

Transportation

- Work to increase available client transportation via GATRA and the Town of Franklin

Housing

- Continue and expand access to available housing resources
- Explore FFP participation in organizations that discuss and make determinations around public housing

Why?

“Food insecurity is defined as a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life. This can be a temporary situation for a household or can last a long time. Food insecurity is one way we can measure how many people cannot afford food.” – Feeding America

Feeding America is a nationwide United States–based nonprofit network of more than 200 food banks that feed more than 46 million people through food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other community-based agencies.

The Franklin Food Pantry (FFP) is part of this massive network. Franklin Food Pantry’s mission is to alleviate food insecurity and compassionately empower our community through resources and collaboration. The Franklin Food Pantry envisions a community in which everyone in need has an improved quality of life through nutritious food and supportive resources.

Food insecurity is a cycle. The University of California’s Dr. Hilary Seligman states:

“When you are food insecure, you use coping strategies such as eating less nutritious food because it costs less, which can lead to chronic disease. When you have a chronic disease, your health-care expenses go up and you can have a hard time keeping a job, which decreases your income. With reduced income, you have to make difficult decisions between paying for food and paying other bills, which will lead to food insecurity.”²

“Hunger involves not only immeasurable human costs, but also economic costs stemming from higher health and education expenditure needs as well as worse health and education outcomes and resultant losses in income and production.”³

“Food is one of the few flexible parts of a tight budget. Rent is a fixed amount. Car payments are constant. The charges for electricity and basic telephone service cannot be compromised, negotiated, or trimmed. But the amount a family spends on food is elastic; it can be expanded or squeezed to fit whatever cash is left after the unyielding bills are paid. The result is an array of malnourished children in America.”⁴

The Franklin Food Pantry offers services to hundreds of households in Franklin, MA. But are there more food insecure families we are not reaching? How do we reach them? Are we offering the programs that our neighbors need most? What more can we do to reduce the incidence of hunger in Franklin? How impactful are we in our mission? Finding the answers to these questions is the purpose of this Client Needs Assessment.

The Community Needs Assessment identifies the current state of hunger in Franklin, recommends programmatic and operational changes to address gaps and weaknesses in reach and service, and hopes to be the catalyst for change that will quantitatively and qualitatively reduce the incidence of hunger in Franklin.

² Reinventing Food Banks and Pantries: New Tools to End Hunger, Katie S. Martin, 2021.

³ Economic Benefits of the Food Bank and Charitable Food Distribution Network, Dr M.Ray Perryman, 12/24/14

⁴ The Working Poor: Invisible in America; David K. Shipler, 2005

Who?

The Franklin Food Pantry was created in 1987 to relieve food insecurity in the town of Franklin, MA. FFP endeavors to build a community in which everyone in need has an improved quality of life through access to nutritious food and supportive resources. Through a Board of Directors, 8 paid staff members, and over 140 active volunteers, the Franklin Food Pantry offered supplemental food assistance and household necessities to over 474 eligible households in FY21.

Our primary clients are residents of Franklin, MA and the immediate surrounding towns experiencing financial barriers, including low-income levels. We depend on donations from community members, corporations, foundations, and other strategic partners. Many of our programs began as pilot programs and have successfully expanded to become integral components of our organization. These programs improve the health of our clients by increasing their access to healthy food, including fresh fruits and vegetables.

Pantry operating policies and programs pre-COVID:

- Full “client choice” in-person shopping by appointment monthly
- A selection of daily bread and produce without an appointment
- Walk-in Fridays where all clients were invited in for a full-shopping trip, no appointment necessary, to help ensure they had enough food to feed their families
- Mobile Pantry, a collaboration with the Franklin Housing Authority which delivers food monthly to select neighborhoods where people have difficulty getting to the Pantry
- Weekend Backpack Program which provided weekend meals and snacks to Franklin elementary and middle school children in need. Started as a pilot in 2018 and is a collaboration with the school system and local corporations
- Carts for Clients which provided free, portable shopping carts to clients who need a little extra help in transporting their groceries home
- Healthy Futures shelf that offered items that fit special dietary needs, such as low fat, no salt, high protein or gluten-free. Began collaborating with the Hockomock YMCA in 2013.
- Emergency food bags
- Seasonal holiday meal packages

Pantry operating policies and programs post Covid, effective March 2020, reflect the continuation of many existing programs while adding new services:

- *New* Curbside distribution system with pre-packed food that is offered twice a week with day and evening hours. Neighbors can visit once weekly.
- Full “client choice” in-person shopping by appointment on a weekly basis, beginning in October 2021
- *New* Mobile Pantry program expansion to Glen Meadow apartments
- *New* Weekend Backpack Program expansion over the summer months
- Carts for Clients
- Emergency food bags
- *New* Home delivery option for those unable to come to our facility
- *New* Kid’s Bags containing four days of two meals per day plus a snack and 3 drinks, provided to families with one bag given per child
- *New* seasonal holiday meal package for the summer holiday, in addition to the Thanksgiving and winter holiday meal packages
- *New* Client Service office hours for clients to privately discuss referral options for our neighbors’ specific needs

How?

To comprehensively evaluate our clients' needs, we evaluated expert literature on the topic of food insecurity, as well as conducted primary research and assessed third party data sources. These findings were evaluated in the context of our annual report and strategic plan.⁵

Literature review included relevant books, studies and articles on the topic of food insecurity:

- Opportunities to Improve Food Equity and Access in Massachusetts (Greater Boston Food Bank 2022)
- Reinventing Food Banks and Pantries (Martin, 2021)
- The Working Poor (Shipler, 2004)
- Community Food Project – Evaluation Handbook (National Research Center, Inc. Third Edition, 2006)
- Community Food Security – Assessment Toolkit (Economic Research Service, July 2002)
- What's Cooking in your Food System? A Guide to Community Food Assessment (Community Food Security Coalition, 2002)

Primary research included:

- Detailed paper survey distributed to clients in summer 2021 to complete in private at home. The survey was 21 questions, and the 158 respondents received a \$10 grocery store gift card when completed and returned. When available, comments are compared to a 2016 FFP survey of 151 clients.
- "Question of the Week" dot survey geared towards soliciting input from every client that came through the distribution line. We asked 10 questions over 10 weeks in Summer 2021.

A 14-question survey to leaders of 12 synergistic organizations (9 completed surveys returned):

- Franklin Police social worker
- Saint Vincent de Paul
- Franklin Senior Center
- Meals on Wheels
- Interfaith Council
- New England Chapel
- Friends of Franklin
- Santa Foundation
- Hockomock YMCA
- Dean College
- Neighbor Brigade
- United Way of Tri-County

Third party data sources reviewed included census and local information:

- Low-income housing
- SNAP eligibility and participation
- Economic characteristics
- Food store availability
- Transportation availability
- Community gardens
- Town of Franklin Housing Production Plan, Public Review Draft, May 2021

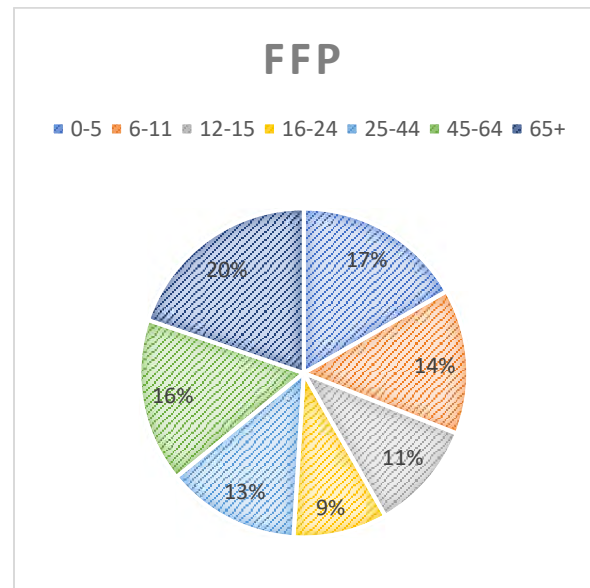
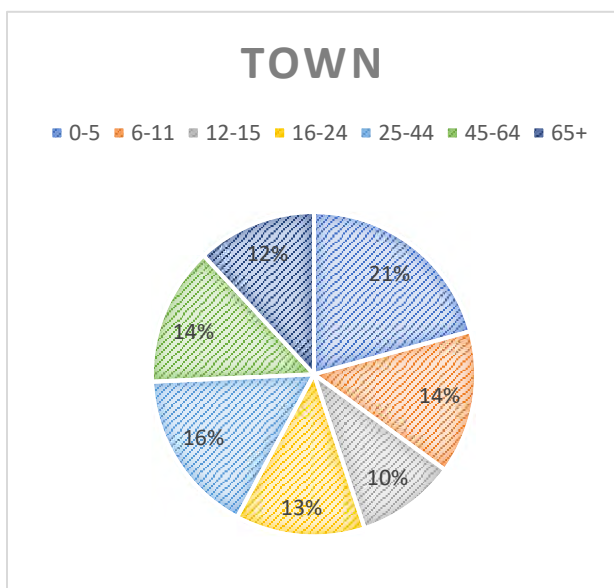
⁵ Available on our website, <https://www.franklinfoodpantry.org/>

Community Awareness

Per Franklin’s recent market study (2019-2020): “The Town of Franklin is a community of approximately 34,000 residents, and is a historic, beautiful town with an excellent sense of community, with well-maintained open space, a high-quality college, attractive residential neighborhoods, a downtown that is the heart of entertainment and culture for Franklin, unique and active business corridors, and a wealth of commercial and industrial businesses.”

Franklin Age Demographics

At 20%, the largest segment of FFP’s client population are senior citizens. Between 2000 and 2018, Franklin’s population grew by 14% and is projected to grow another 4.65% between 2018 and 2023. The largest percentage growth is projected to occur within the population age 65 and over at 2.7% growth, followed by 1.7% growth in the population age 25-44.⁶ This data illustrates predicted increased need for seniors as fixed income can create food insecurity. “Food insecurity is a particular problem for older Americans, as many live on a fixed income and often have worse health than younger adults. These health conditions are often caused or exacerbated by inadequate diet.”⁷



Franklin Ethnicity Demographics

FFP clients are more racially diverse than the town's racial makeup. “Concentration of social and economic disadvantage among people of color over the life course is clearly a significant driver of higher rates of food insecurity. Substantial gaps in the wealth of people of color and whites have long existed in the U.S. For example, recent data reported by the Pew Research Center indicate that the wealth of white households was 13 times the median wealth of black and 10 times greater than Hispanic households.”⁸ About 10% of our clients indicated that they were non-English speakers. While a small percent, this response captures an emerging diverse population settling in Franklin and utilizing FFP.

⁶ Franklin Market Study, (2019-2020)

https://www.franklinma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif6896/f/mai/files/8a_final_town_of_franklin_market_study_1.pdf

⁷ <https://frac.org/blog/food-insecurity-malnutrition-health-older-adults-testimony-u-s-senate-special-committee-aging>

⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5823283/>

Ethnicity	Town Data (2019)⁹	Franklin Food Pantry FY2021
White	91%	57%
Black	1%	7%
American Indian	0	1%
Asian	6%	2%
Hispanic and Latin	2%	10%
Not Tracked/Other	0	24% ¹⁰

Income and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Data in our Area

SNAP is the federal program formerly known as food stamps. Eligibility for the program is based on household size and income. Eligible recipients use an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card to purchase groceries at authorized food stores. Most supermarkets are authorized but not all convenience stores allow SNAP purchases.

Median Household Income ¹¹	All households	Not receiving SNAP	Receiving SNAP
Franklin	\$122,607	\$126,610	\$45,606*
Bellingham	\$101,477	\$104,000	\$36,978*
Medway	\$132,823	\$133,987	\$24,545*
Milford	\$83,243	\$89,264	\$22,091*

Further, of the 9,860 estimated people in extreme poverty (below 50% FPL) in MetroWest, about half are in four communities; Framingham (2,168); Milford (1,139); Franklin (759); and Marlborough (747)¹²

SNAP Gap

The SNAP Gap is the difference between the number of low-income Massachusetts residents receiving MassHealth who are likely SNAP eligible and the number of people receiving SNAP. In Massachusetts, the size of this gap is over 700,000 residents (based on state data from December 2020).

SNAP Gap 2021¹³	SNAP Eligible (receiving Mass Health)	SNAP Enrolled	SNAP Gap	SNAP Gap %
Franklin	3,284	1,508	1,776	54%
Bellingham	2,679	1,222	1,457	54%
Medway	1,174	472	702	60%
Milford	8,524	2,435	6,090	71%

For many years the state has administered these food and health programs separately. This means the application process and collection of documents is duplicated for both MassHealth and SNAP. This creates more work for the state and for low-income households. Most states implement a single eligibility system.¹⁴

⁹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/franklintowncitymassachusetts>

¹⁰ Data shows 24% of FFP clients' ethnicity is not tracked. This gap is due to the influx of emergency clients during the COVID pandemic and the difficulty of getting accurate client data in the curbside distribution setting.

¹¹ Table S2201, US Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates "*" indicates a margin of error >35% of the estimate

¹² MetroWest Health Foundation Understanding Economic Insecurity in MetroWest Chartbook, September 2021

¹³ <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/food.bank.of.western.ma/viz/SNAPGAP2021/AllDistricts> March 2021 update

¹⁴ <https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/its-time-finally-close-massachusetts-snap-gap-and-expand-common-apps-2021>

Franklin reports 3,284 people receiving Mass Health while only 1,508 are enrolled in SNAP. That leaves 1,776 individuals who likely could benefit from SNAP and FFP. Our client survey showed that 47.1% of our clients do not receive SNAP which, based on FY21 numbers, would mean that 517 of our clients are likely included in Franklin's 1,776 SNAP gap.

For each month in the last fiscal year, 64%-78% of Franklin households receiving SNAP were not utilizing FFP. Combining that data with the data from the SNAP Gap, there are between 549 and 755 households who could benefit from the pantry but do not currently shop with us.

Partner Survey

The responses to our partner survey demonstrate that while most participants were aware of food insecurity issues in our town, there is still confusion about how widespread it is. This provides an opportunity to educate the broader community as almost a quarter of respondents "didn't know" there is a food insecurity need.

The number of households that FFP has served over the past 7 years is between 440 and 620 with an average of 504. However, 77% of partners surveyed thought that FFP serves 400 or fewer households, further illustrating the need for awareness throughout the town of the extent of food insecurity in Franklin.

Partners were queried around strategies to increase access to food and offered extremely valuable insights. While 20% of partners surveyed felt that those in need in our community are aware of the existing resources, the majority indicated that all resources were not truly known to those who need it. FFP has already implemented some of the recommended strategies, but the data supports the need to further educate the community about what we do and share our service offerings with other local supports, including schools, houses of worship, Franklin Housing Authority, and the Franklin Senior Center. Current programming available through other social service agencies is discussed in the Partnerships section.

Barriers to Access

Our client survey responses generally indicated a lower incidence of perceived barriers than was thought by our partner agencies. About 16% of FFP clients surveyed stated that public transportation would help them get the food they need, but partner agencies thought the need was much greater. Stigma and fear of a degrading experience affected 4% of clients who felt too embarrassed to use SNAP benefits; partner agencies felt that stigma was stronger. Lack of awareness of available resources was reflected in almost 10% of clients who did not know how to get SNAP benefits and 4% indicating they did not know about them. Partner agencies thought that lack of awareness of available resources was a greater percentage.

This difference in findings could indicate client underreporting of the challenges they face due to concerns about perception, stigma and a desire to be self-reliant. According to GBFB's October 2020 - January 2021 survey of over 3,000 low-income adults, the most reported barriers to using food pantries included a desire for self-reliance, lack of knowledge about pantry hours, stigma, and concern over having too many assets to use a food pantry.

There are more food-insecure families in our area than are our clients and there remains lack of awareness around the depth of FFP programs. While there is a demonstrated need for FFP and ample justification for expanded programs in the future, FFP must raise awareness amongst potential partner organization and clients about its services.

Community Awareness Recommendations

- Increase community awareness of the extent of food insecurity through a variety of FFP communications, including partner communication outlets
- Increase community knowledge of available resources for those experiencing food insecurity through a variety of methods
- Educate the community about what we do and the services we provide
- Focus concerted effort on sharing information with other emergency food agencies in our area, including schools, houses of worship, emergency responders, Franklin Housing Authority, etc.
- Conduct presentations at the Senior Center and other local human service agencies to widen awareness of services we offer

Nutrition

The 2021 FFP client survey indicated that 42% of clients would like to eat healthier and have increased access to proteins. While 95.5% of clients said that FFP provided them with the food they needed to prepare nutritious meals, multiple clients expressed the need to follow special diets. Based on 2019 data, 12.3% of FFP clients suffer from diabetes, whereas the 2019 Massachusetts state rate is 9.3%.

By increasing client access to more nutritious food, we hope to address the needs of clients on special diets.

In 2016, 67% of clients could not afford to eat healthy meals in the past 12 months whereas in 2021, about 56% of clients could not afford to eat healthy meals. This improvement could be due to the increase in SNAP benefits, COVID-19 stimulus packages, and the child tax credit, all of which have expired.

The FFP distribution model changed due to COVID-19 to allow clients to shop once per week, as opposed to the previous once per month system. Multiple and more frequent distribution options enable clients to get more fresh food on a more regular basis.

The majority of community partners echo research findings that poor mental and physical health are the main problems related to food insecurity at the community level which coincides with the disproportionate number of food insecure individuals who are affected by chronic diseases, including diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity, exacerbating adverse effects on overall health and wellbeing.¹⁵

Nutrition Recommendations

- Develop new programs and collaborations for special dietary needs (gluten-free, diabetic, heart healthy etc)
- Expand frozen produce options for our clients
- Increase sensitivity to diverse cultural differences, dietary restrictions, and expand translation services

¹⁵ <https://www.healthcarevaluehub.org/advocate-resources/publications/social-determinants-health-food-insecurity-united-states>

Community Garden

“When we understand that many families struggling with poverty and food insecurity also struggle with chronic diseases, and that low-income communities have very limited amounts of healthy, affordable food, then the need to provide healthy food in food banks and food pantries becomes obvious and more important. It is a matter of food justice.”¹⁶

The Franklin Community Garden is Franklin’s very first community garden and is under the authority of the Recreation Department. It was completed in the spring of 2011 with 46 raised beds that are individually leased. In its first year, every single bed was leased, and a wait list became necessary. A major goal of the community garden is to build a stronger community. King Street Memorial Community Garden is located at King Street Memorial Park. To ensure gardening opportunities are available to all members of the Franklin community, the Community Garden Program offers financial assistance for those in need to help cover garden plot rental fees.¹⁷

In June 2019, FFP began a small pilot at the Franklin Community Garden run by a group of our clients and volunteers. The program has grown from a harvest of 75 pounds in 2019 to 890 pounds of produce in 2021 while simultaneously increasing partnerships with community volunteers and area churches along the way. Partnering with the Franklin Recreation Department and obtaining a grant from the Greater Milford Community Health Network (CHNA 6), FFP grew the program from 2 to 11 beds in 2022. This program promotes a greener environment, contributing to goals in the town’s Master Plan. All the produce is distributed to FFP clients in a “farmer’s market” style setup at the end of the drive-up distribution line, or during inside shopping hours. Our volunteer Horticulturist Technician spearheads this program and devotes ten to fifteen hours a week to manage and coordinate the hands-on details. We carefully weigh each item harvested and distributed to clients to capture program impact.

The 2021 FFP client survey clearly recorded that our clients want fresh fruits and vegetables. They would like to eat healthier. They want more farmers markets to accept food stamps/vouchers (40%), more community gardens (32%), and more workshops on gardening (15%). When food has run out, 65% stated that it was fresh produce that was missing and 40% stated they need more produce to prepare nutritious meals.

Environmentally, food waste is decreased due to the Community Garden. Prior to COVID-19 we received rejected produce from local grocery stores. The product we received did not last long and much of it was spoiled before it reached our clients. Due to supply chain issues during the pandemic, we pivoted to growing and harvesting our own produce. What we cannot grow, we purchase from Restaurant Depot, a wholesale food supplier. These changes not only ensure that we give our clients consistently fresh and high-quality produce, but also decreases the amount of produce spoils we throw away each month by 66%. Our new produce procurement model eliminates a great deal of food waste and promotes food equity for our community.

The overall health of our community improves by giving our clients increased access to fresh produce.

“More than a tenth of the U.S. population (13% = 41 million people) is currently living in poverty. In this population, the socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental conditions have detrimental health effects such as higher rates of chronic diseases, communicable illnesses, health risk behaviors, and premature mortality. People living in poverty are also deprived of social, psychological, and political power, leading to continuation of worsening health and chronic deprivation over generations.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Reinventing Food Banks and Pantries: New Tools to End Hunger; Katie S. Martin, 2021

¹⁷ <https://www.franklinma.gov/recreation-department/slideshows/community-garden>

¹⁸ National Center for Biotechnology Information, US National Library of Medicine, and National Institutes of Health, March 2018

As presented earlier, we estimate that in FY21 between 549 and 755 households who could benefit from the pantry do not currently shop with us. We also know that access to fresh produce is a high priority for the majority of our clients and plays a role in overall health.

FFP is committed to ensuring that everyone has access to healthy, nutritious food in our community and will work to increase their consumption of healthy fruits and vegetables.

The state's Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) helps SNAP clients buy more fruits and vegetables for their household. SNAP benefits can be used at participating HIP retailers to buy fruits and vegetables. SNAP clients receive \$1 back on their EBT card for each dollar spent on eligible fruits and vegetables, up to a monthly limit. HIP retailers include approved farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and community supported agriculture (CSA) farm share programs. According to the Department of Transitional Assistance website, in 2021, there was only one HIP Farmer's Market Booth in our area.

Upon identifying this need during our research phase, Franklin Food Pantry and the Franklin Farmer's Market began work towards addressing this gap. Tremendous progress has been made and as of 2022, SNAP benefits will be accepted at the Franklin Farmer's Market. We would like to recognize Lauren Kloos and Roger Trahan for leading the development of this new program.

FFP's Community Garden program and "farmers market" distribution of fresh local produce promotes food equity for our community, is environmentally conscious, increases access to healthy foods and meets the needs expressed by respondents to our client paper and "Question of the Week" surveys.

Community Garden Recommendations

- Open communication with area farms ahead of spring 2022 around the ability and interest to offer SNAP options
- Work with Franklin Farmer's Market to encourage local farms to participate in HIP program
- Expand the FFP Community Garden program
- Explore additional partnerships with fresh food providers

Partnerships, Programs and Wrap Around Services

In, [Reinventing Food Banks and Pantries: New Tools to End Hunger](#), Katie Martin, the Executive Director of the Foodshare Institute for Hunger Research and Solutions in Connecticut, encourages food-focused charities to evolve into centers of community empowerment that foster long-term stability. FFP evaluated our research with this goal in mind.

“If we define hunger as a symptom of poverty caused by a broken system, and rooted in social inequalities, then the solution becomes quite different.” – Katie Martin

Partnerships

According to the Economic Research Service, “Five characteristics are most strongly associated with the likelihood of experiencing food insecurity: low levels of education, weak social networks, limited social capital, low household income, and being unemployed. Social networks refers to the respondent’s ability to make new friends. Social capital refers to the ability to count on friends and family in times of need.”¹⁹ FFP aims to strengthen the social networks and social capital available to our neighbors by forging partnerships with other social service agencies for their behalf.

The other food distribution agencies available for Franklin residents are Meals on Wheels, Hockomock YMCA, and the Senior Center. Meals on Wheels, offered through Tri-Valley, are provided short-term or long-term to homebound elders aged 60 and older who are unable to prepare a nutritionally balanced meal for themselves. Cold evening meals and frozen weekend meals are also available for clients who have no other resources. There are no income guidelines for Meals on Wheels and no fee for the service, but they do ask for a donation to help to pay for the program. The suggested donation amount of \$3.00 per meal is reflected in a monthly donation statement. However, they never deny anyone a meal if they can’t afford to donate.²⁰ Tri-Valley provides around 100 meals per day to Franklin residents.

The Franklin YMCA offers bags of non-perishable foods from their location on Wednesdays from 1:00pm-2:00pm. Senior Citizens may come from 12:30pm-1:00pm.

The Franklin Senior Center offers low-cost breakfast and lunch each weekday in their cafe. Franklin’s St. Mary’s chapter of St. Vincent de Paul offers a small food pantry of shelf stable items to its clients. There are no other food distribution agencies in Franklin, MA and FFP is the only one which offers fresh proteins and produce to its clients.

Programs

Our client survey used validated, standardized questions, such as “we worry whether our food would run out before we had money to buy more.”²¹ We ask if that is “often true,” “sometimes true,” or “never true.” These questions recognize that anxiety is a common phenomenon, and that program design can help reduce that stress.

As we support people in becoming more food secure, we must focus on moving out of immediate anxiety so clients can think long term. We can do that with programming to help people progress along a continuum toward stability.

At the beginning of COVID-19, FFP moved to a weekly shopping experience versus a monthly experience. This model can help alleviate stress around having enough food, transportation, and childcare as there are more options, increased

¹⁹ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/june/who-are-the-world-s-food-insecure-identifying-the-risk-factors-of-food-insecurity-around-the-world/>

²⁰ <https://www.trivalleyinc.org/>

²¹ USDA Economic Research Service, 1995, Food Security Screening Tools <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/survey-tools/#six>

access, and more client control. We recently instituted our first ever hybrid distribution model, allowing clients the dignity and equity of choosing which shopping mode works best for their situation: curbside, in person or home delivery.

When asked if they would use an online order form, 56% of clients responded yes. When asked if weekend hours would be helpful, about a third of respondents said yes. These responses merit further review.

Clients were asked if the food they bought in the last 12 months just didn't last, or if they didn't have money to get more. When this question was asked of clients in 2016, 70% responded "often or sometimes true", whereas in 2021, 53% reported the same. This improvement may be due to the increase in SNAP benefits COVID-19 stimulus packages and child tax credit, all of which have expired. Coupled with the change in the FFP distribution model from monthly to weekly, clients may have been able to access more fresh food on a more regular basis.

The number of clients receiving SNAP increased by 8.8% in the past 5 years. This could be indicative of the additional benefits given to SNAP recipients due to the government's COVID-19 pandemic economic stimulus package. This survey was conducted in the summer of 2021 before many of the stimulus benefits expired in the fall and winter of 2021.

For FFP clients receiving SNAP benefits the food seems to last longer now than in 2016, however in aggregate the percentage of those families where food lasts less than half the month (56.4%) has increased by 2.4%. Taking into account the additional benefits as part of the government's COVID-19 pandemic economic stimulus package, this is unexpected. This indicates more need, perhaps driven by food price increases that outpaced the SNAP increases. Since April 2020, food prices have increased an average of 3.6% for food bought for at-home consumption on a monthly year-over-year basis.

Increased food costs combined with the stress of job insecurity, the threat of illness, and shortages of consumer goods has made what we do at the Franklin Food Pantry more important than ever.

On May 5, 2021, the Boston Globe reported "Between last October and January, the Greater Boston Food Bank surveyed over 3,000 adults in the region, and found that only one out of three people experiencing food insecurity at the time were actually using food pantries... Nearly half of the adults surveyed who didn't have enough to eat were not accessing assistance programs like food pantries or SNAP. And while many knew about such programs, stigmas and a sense of self-reliance kept them from wanting to use them... Fifty-four percent of those experiencing food insecurity had not signed up for SNAP, despite the fact that a majority of them – 71 percent – said they knew about the program and how to access it. But many worried they were ineligible and were concerned about what paperwork they might need to share."

The survey found that 73 percent of respondents who were not using SNAP said they wanted to support themselves instead of relying on public assistance. Advocates for food insecurity programs argue these findings demonstrate a need for public awareness campaigns that share details about food support services and work to reduce the stigmas."

FFP survey respondents in 2016 and 2021 supported the GBFB findings:

- The client did not need SNAP
- The client did not think they were eligible due to income
- The client did not qualify

Taken together, FFP recognizes that more information should be made available regarding SNAP qualification requirements. FFP should aim to increase applications for those eligible for SNAP. A dedicated resource on a periodic basis could assist our neighbors in the process of applying for these benefits. As the primary food option for food insecure residents of Franklin, FFP should educate our clients regarding SNAP benefits and assist them in the application process.

Wrap Around Services

For FFP clients that must choose between food and other items when money is tight, the top expenditures are still utilities (33.6%), rent (24.2%) and medications (21.5%) in 2021 versus 2016. “According to Hunger in America 2014, many households who use charitable food programs must make difficult choices to meet their basic needs. Specifically, households served by the Feeding America network reported choosing between:

- Food and medical care (66%)
- Food and utilities (69%)
- Food and transportation (67%)
- Food and housing (57%)”

Sixty five percent of our own clients expressed interest in accessing public program assistance and in connecting with other partners and local resources during our question of the week survey.

FFP should develop client services programming that expands our ability to connect clients with outside agencies addressing specific client needs. Integral to a successful client service program is space for confidential client conversations to meet our mission to compassionately empower our community through resources and collaboration.

When asked if at least one adult in a client household was currently employed, 62.7% answered no. While 30% of respondents were of retirement age, this statistic does present an opportunity for FFP to assist in clients’ employment efforts and/or underscores the likely prevalence of fixed income households among FFP clients.

We also learned that encouragement from family or friends is essential for individuals seeking help, which suggests that increasing access to food insecurity resources is not simply a matter of knowledge of available resources but also reducing stigma around accessing these resources.

Partnerships, Programs and Wrap Around Services Recommendations

- Consider expanding client office hours to facilitate referral to agencies addressing specific needs
- Provide more information regarding SNAP qualification and application process
- Offer enrollment assistance for public programs and check in with clients about which resources they want
- Secure space for confidential client conversations
- Raise awareness of other food resource options available to our clients in Franklin (e.g., Meals on Wheels, Senior Center, St. Vincent de Paul, Farmer’s Market vendors that accept SNAP)
- Expand opportunities posted on Job Board located in Pantry; solicit available openings from the community
- Provide periodic job assistance trainings/workshops
- Develop relationship with local health care providers to spread awareness of what FFP offers as well as understand and better accommodate concomitant health needs of clients
- Evaluate the demand for and feasibility of expanding in person shopping times/days
- Continue and expand collaboration with fellow agencies to expand our collective impact
- Coordinate outreach to Friends of Franklin clients about FFP services given its closing in 2021

Youth Programs

FFP's Weekend Backpack program provides weekend meals and snacks to Franklin school children in need. It started as a pilot in 2018 and is a collaboration with the school system and local corporations. Currently, it provides 56 backpacks every week to all 9 elementary/middle schools in Franklin. Each bag contains 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 4 snacks, and juice/milk. We know there are more hungry children in Franklin than we are reaching. Pre-COVID there were almost 700 children eligible for free/reduced lunch yet we only had 295 children as members of families who shopped with us.

Of the 38 respondents who stated that their children do not participate in the Weekend Backpack program, 19 had children of school age and 19 did not.

Fifty percent of respondents whose school age children could potentially benefit from the Weekend Backpack Program do not participate in the program.

Of the survey respondents who have children, 97% indicated they need more food to feed their children over school breaks.

Youth Program Recommendations

- Evaluate bigger bags for Weekend Backpack and Kid's Bags for those weeks covering school vacations
- Investigate summer food programs for children
- Pursue Weekend Backpack expansion into Franklin High School
- Provide more information to our clients about the Weekend Backpack program as well as educate the community about the program and its benefits to increase enrollment

Transportation

The 2021 FFP client survey found 16% of clients report that public transportation would help them get the food they need. Some partner agencies also said that transportation was a roadblock in getting food to the people who need it. In addition, when money is tight about 15% of clients must choose between transportation/car maintenance and food. Historically about one quarter of our clients do not have consistent transportation to our facility.

The Client Needs Assessment supports the need for ensuring FFP’s physical space has public transportation access.

According to the CDC, “A poor transportation system cuts off access to many food outlets—especially for those who do not own a car or have no access to reliable and affordable public transportation. Improving transportation options to and from such food sources as supermarkets and farmers’ markets increases a community’s access to healthy foods. Transportation improvements may include increasing bus routes to food retailers and supermarket-sponsored shuttle services.”²²

Fortunately, FFP’s current and future locations are in downtown Franklin, where many of our clients reside. Approximately 39% of our clients live within a one-mile radius of the future location of FFP at 341 West Central Street, Franklin, MA.

The following are transportation options available for Franklin residents:

- [Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority \(GATRA\)](#) -
 - 800-698-7676
 - Curb-to-curb transportation for passengers who meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements and/or are age 60 and above
 - Rides will go up to a 15-mile radius.
 - Monday - Friday from 6 am – 6:30 pm and Saturday from 9 am – 5 pm.
 - Reservations are taken Monday-Friday from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm
- [Miles for Health/Dial-a-Ride](#)
 - GATRA’s Miles for Health program is shared long distance medical transportation serving seniors and people with disabilities in the towns of Franklin, Foxboro, Norfolk and Wrentham.
 - Reservations are taken Monday through Friday from 8 am – 4 pm. 48 hours advanced notice is required
 - **Boston Schedule:** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Appointments must be made between the hours of 9 am and 1 pm
 - **All Other Trips:** All other long distance medical trips, such as Burlington, Framingham, Newton-Wellesley and Worcester, will be scheduled for Wednesdays. Appointments must be made between the hours of 9 am and 1 pm
- FISH of Franklin, Inc.
 - 508-528-2121
 - Rides for seniors to and from medical appointments
 - Monday-Friday, 9 am – 5 pm. *Franklin residents only*
 - Reservations needed 3-5 days in advance. Donations accepted, however, the rider pays gas

Transportation Recommendations

- Work to increase available client transportation via GATRA and the Town of Franklin

²² <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/healthtopics/healthyfood/transportation.htm>

Housing

Almost a quarter of FFP clients surveyed indicated that when money is tight they sometimes must choose between food and rent/mortgage. As of December 2021, seven FFP clients reported being homeless. In our 2016 Client Survey, 33% reported having trouble paying rent or mortgage, 10% had trouble finding a place to live that they could afford, 6% had been evicted from their apartment, and 1% had their homes foreclosed.

“Housing costs represent a significant expenditure for low-income families, with research finding that more than half of low-income families with children spend more than 50 percent of their incomes on housing. For low-income households, the burden of high housing costs reduces housing stability and increases the risk of food insecurity. Housing assistance may be a resource that helps low-income families avoid food insecurity. Alternatively, families that qualify for housing assistance may have such limited resources that they risk food insecurity even when they receive housing assistance.”²³

Housing Cost Burden in our Area

Housing Cost Burdened Households ²⁴	Number of Rental Units	Percent Cost Burdened Renters	Number of Mortgaged Units	Percent Cost Burdened Mortgage holders
Franklin	2197	38.5%*	7,418	22.8%*
Bellingham	1,067	45.0%*	4,157	24.1%*
Medway	427	36.3%*	3,337	23.3%*
Milford	3,242	47.4%*	5,676	28.7%*

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development considers people whose housing cost exceed 30% of their income to be ‘housing cost burdened. If a large portion of income goes towards the cost of shelter, there may be insufficient supply left for food, transportation, medical bills, and other necessary expenses.

Housing Cost Burden is common among renters in MetroWest, with 15% to 77% of renters paying more than 30% of their household income towards rent.”²⁵ As depicted above, 38.5% of renters in Franklin are cost burdened.

Affordable Housing in our Area

Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40B requires that each Massachusetts town and city have a minimum of 10% of its total year-round housing units as affordable housing. The Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) is used to measure a community's stock of low-or moderate-income housing for the purposes of M.G.L. Chapter 40B. While housing developed under Chapter 40B is eligible for inclusion on the inventory, many other types of housing also qualify to count toward a community's affordable housing stock.²⁶ Franklin currently exceeds the state SHI requirement of 10%.

FFP supports Franklin’s Housing Production Goals, intended to increase the number of SHI Eligible Housing units as well as to increase the number of affordable housing units available to the community’s families, individuals, persons with special needs, and the elderly. FFP welcomes being an active participant in these efforts.

²³ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2020/november/food-insecurity-rates-are-relatively-high-for-participants-in-hud-federal-housing-assistance-programs/>

²⁴ Source Table DP04, US Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates “*” indicates a margin of error >35% of the estimate

²⁵ MetroWest Health Foundation Understanding Economic Insecurity in MetroWest Chartbook, September 2021

²⁶ https://www.franklinma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf6896/f/uploads/franklin_housing_production_plan_-_may_2021_public_draft.pdf

Franklin Households Qualifying for Affordable Housing Programs²⁷

Income Distribution Overview	Owners	Renters	Total
Household Income <= 30% AMFI*	375	530	905
Household Income >30% to <=50% AMFI	650	385	1,035
Household Income >50% to <=80% AMFI	895	255	1,150
Household Income >80% to <=100% AMFI	690	230	920
Household Income >100% AMFI	6,865	775	7,640
Total	9,475	2,180	11,655

*AMFI – Area Median Family Income

As shown in the above table “approximately 3,090 of Franklin households (26.5%) may qualify for affordable housing programs, including purchasing housing units on Franklin’s SHI, based on income. While households may qualify for purchase of housing units on Franklin’s SHI, but they many times do not qualify for a mortgage.”²⁸

Subsidized Housing Inventory in our Area

State and Federal Public Housing Units per Local Housing Authority, by Program ²⁹	Chapter 200 ³⁰ (veterans family)	Chapter 667 ³⁴ (elderly and handicap)	Chapter 705 ³⁴ (family)	Chapter 167 & 689 ³⁴ (Special Occupancy disabled)	Total State Public Housing Units	Federal Public Housing Units	Total Fed & State Public Housing
Franklin	28	165	5	8	206	0	206
Bellingham	0	120	3	0	123	0	123
Medway	0	94	0	9	103	100	203
Milford	69	180	23	16	288	65	353

Department of Housing and Community Development Chapter 40B SHI ³¹	2010 Census Year Round Housing Units	Total Development Units	SHI Units	% SHI Units
Franklin	11,350	1,819	1,357	12%
Bellingham	6,341	983	801	12.6%
Medway	4,603	830	529	11.5%
Milford	11,379	1,483	701	6.2%

Housing Recommendations

- Continue and expand access to available housing resources
- Explore FFP participation in organizations that discuss and make determinations around public housing

²⁷ HUD CHAS Data, www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html, 2014-2018, ACS

²⁸ Franklin Housing Production Plan

²⁹ Mass.gov, Local Housing Authority Unit Counts by Program Listing, September 26, 2019

³⁰ <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/state-public-housing-programs>

³¹ Mass.gov; Department of Housing and Community Development Chapter 40b Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) as of Dec 21, 2020

Conclusion

Throughout FFP's existence we have anecdotally identified our clients' needs directly from them and made necessary changes to best meet evolving situations. Whether it be the need for shopping carts for our clients with mobility challenges or without transportation, or the need for curbside and home delivery, we have pivoted to address client needs. With this comprehensive Client Needs Assessment, using a variety of tools including client surveys, questions of the week, client services partnerships and conversations between our dedicated volunteers and clients, we can use data to intentionally build programs to meet our community's diverse requirements.

We have always assumed there are those in the community who need our help but do not currently shop with us. This assumption was difficult to confirm via internal only data. In this comprehensive review inclusive of external and internal data, we clearly document the existence of additional food insecure and low-income families in our community.

The next phase is to develop long term programs and that continue to expand our reach, help those in our community who might be suffering and work to de-stigmatize the struggles associated with food insecurity. The first step in this phase is sharing this report with our community.

The recommendations supported by the Client Needs Assessment are presented below:

Community Awareness

- Increase community awareness of the extent of food insecurity through a variety of FFP communications, including partner communication outlets
- Increase community knowledge of available resources for those experiencing food insecurity through a variety of methods
- Educate the community about what we do and the services we provide
- Focus concerted effort on sharing information with other emergency food agencies in our area, including schools, churches, emergency responders, Franklin Housing Authority, etc.
- Conduct presentations at the Senior Center and other local human service agencies to widen awareness of services we offer

Nutrition

- Develop new programs and collaborations for special dietary needs (gluten-free, diabetic, heart healthy etc)
- Expand frozen produce options for our clients
- Increase sensitivity to diverse cultural differences, dietary restrictions, and expand translation services

Community Garden

- Open communication with area farms ahead of spring 2022 around the ability and interest to accept SNAP
- Work with Franklin Farmer's Market to encourage local farms to participate in Healthy Incentives
- Expand the FFP Community Garden program
- Explore additional partnerships with fresh food providers

Partnerships, Programs and Wrap Around Services

- Consider expanding client office hours to facilitate referral to agencies addressing specific needs
- Provide more information regarding SNAP qualification and application process
- Offer enrollment assistance for public programs and check in with clients about which resources they want
- Secure space for confidential client conversations
- Raise awareness of other food resource options available to our clients in Franklin (e.g., Meals on Wheels, Senior Center, St. Vincent de Paul, Farmer's Market vendors that accept SNAP)

- Expand opportunities posted on Job Board located in Pantry; solicit available openings from the community
- Provide periodic job assistance trainings/workshops
- Develop relationship with local health care providers to spread awareness of what FFP offers as well as understand and better accommodate concomitant health needs of clients
- Evaluate the demand for and feasibility of expanding in person shopping times/days
- Continue and expand collaboration with fellow agencies to expand our collective impact
- Coordinate outreach to Friends of Franklin clients about FFP services given its closing in 2021

Youth Programs

- Evaluate bigger bags for Weekend Backpack and Kid's Bags for those weeks covering school vacations
- Investigate summer food programs for children
- Pursue Weekend Backpack expansion into Franklin High School
- Provide more information to our clients about the Weekend Backpack program as well as educate the community about the program and its benefits to increase enrollment

Transportation

- Work to increase available client transportation via GATRA and the Town of Franklin

Housing

- Continue and expand access to available housing resources
- Explore FFP participation in organizations that discuss and make determinations around public housing

Appendix 1: Demographics of Food Insecurity in our Area

Franklin Age Demographics

Age	Town Data (2018) ³²	Franklin Food Pantry FY21
Under 15	21%	17%
15-24	14%	14%
25-34	10%	11%
35-44	13%	9%
45-54	16%	13%
55-64	14%	16%
65+	12%	20%

Franklin Ethnicity Demographics

Ethnicity	Town Data (2019) ³³	Franklin Food Pantry FY2021
White	91%	57%
Black	1%	7%
American Indian	0	1%
Asian	6%	2%
Hispanic and Latin	2%	10%
Not Tracked/Other	0	24% ³⁴

³² Franklin Market Study (2019-20)

³³ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/franklintowncitymassachusetts>

³⁴ Data shows 24% of FFP clients' ethnicity is not tracked. This gap is due to the influx of emergency clients during the COVID pandemic and the difficulty of getting accurate client data in the curbside distribution setting.

Appendix 2: Income and SNAP Data in our Area

SNAP stands for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the federal program formerly known as food stamps. Eligibility for the program is based on household size and income. Eligible recipients use an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card to purchase groceries at authorized food stores. Most supermarkets are authorized but not all convenience stores allow SNAP purchases.

Income and SNAP Data in our Area

Median Household Income ³⁵	All households	Not receiving SNAP	Receiving SNAP
Franklin	\$122,607	\$126,610	\$45,606*
Bellingham	\$101,477	\$104,000	\$36,978*
Medway	\$132,823	\$133,987	\$24,545*
Milford	\$83,243	\$89,264	\$22,091*

Stores in Franklin Accepting SNAP EBT³⁶:

Store Name	Address
7 Eleven 34401A	20 W Central St
7-eleven 37380a 37380	664 Union St
7-Eleven 37386H	533 W Central St
Big Lots 5138	275 E Central St
Big Y Foods 38	348 E Central St
BJ's Wholesale Club 105	100 Corporate Dr
Charles River Farm	107 Elm St
CVS PHARMACY 1873	435 W Central St
CVS PHARMACY 929	272 E Central St
Db Mart	804 Pond St
DOLLARTREE 8342	303 E Central St
DOLLARTREE 8597	500 Franklin Village Dr
Franklin Mini Market	52 E Central St
Joe's Kwik Mart 511	251 E Central St
Pj Mart 2	150 Emmons St
SHAW'S SUPERMARKET 07581	255 E Central St
Stop & Shop 0472	40 Franklin Village Dr
Walgreens 13005	160 E Central St

³⁵ Table S2201, US Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates “*” indicates a margin of error >35% of the estimate

³⁶ <https://usda-fns.hub.arcgis.com/datasets/USDA-FNS::snap-store-locations/explore?filters=eyJDaXR5IjpbIkZyYW5rbGlulIOsIIN0YXRlljpbIk1BIl19&location=42.103881%2C-71.401641%2C13.00&showTable=true>

Appendix 3: SNAP Gap

The SNAP Gap is the difference between the number of low-income Massachusetts residents receiving MassHealth who are likely SNAP eligible and the number of people actually receiving SNAP. In Massachusetts, the size of this gap is over 700,000 residents (based on state data from December 2020).

SNAP Gap

SNAP Gap 2021 ³⁷	SNAP Eligible (receiving Mass Health)	SNAP Enrolled	SNAP Gap	SNAP Gap %
Franklin	3,284	1,508	1,776	54%
Bellingham	2,679	1,222	1,457	54%
Medway	1,174	472	702	60%
Milford	8,524	2,435	6,090	71%

FFP Eligible Households who Do Not Access the Pantry

	Franklin Households receiving SNAP ³⁸	Households served by FFP	FFP eligible households not coming to the pantry	Percent of population FFP not serving
Jul-20	768	217	551	72%
Aug-20	797	222	575	72%
Sep-20	811	264	547	67%
Oct-20	825	258	567	69%
Nov-20	855	306	549	64%
Dec-20	877	305	572	65%
Jan-21	888	249	639	72%
Feb-21	910	217	693	76%
Mar-21	944	237	707	75%
Apr-21	949	229	720	76%
May-21	966	211	755	78%
Jun-21	968	250	718	74%

Access Barriers Reported by Adults Experiencing Food Insecurity

Barriers for Accessing Food Pantries³⁹	
I want to support myself	74%
I don't know when they are open	62%
I feel embarrassed to use	58%

³⁷ <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/food.bank.of.western.ma/viz/SNAPGAP2021/AllDistricts>, March 2021 update

³⁸ Mass.gov ; Department of Transitional Assistance caseload by zip code reports

³⁹ https://www.gbfb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/GBFB_Gaps_in_Food_Access_Report_Final_May_2021.pdf

I'm worried I have too many personal assets	57%
The hours and location are not convenient	54%
It is difficult for me to travel to the pantry	53%
I'm worried people will find out I use a pantry	51%
I'm worried about paperwork I need to share	49%
I don't know where pantries are located	45%
I'm worried about discrimination due to race/ethnicity	31%

“The Greater Boston Food Bank’s (GBFB) mission is to end hunger in eastern Massachusetts. To work towards this mission, in 2011 GBFB began the development of a new strategic goal to provide one meal per day for each food insecure individual in each city and town in Eastern Massachusetts. This goal was greatly informed by data from Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap study which highlighted the need to understand food insecurity from a geographic perspective; with limited resources, it is increasingly important to ask the questions: where is there hunger in our community and where are the needs of the food insecure not being met?”⁴⁰

GBFB Closing the Meal Gap⁴¹

	Food Insecurity Rate ⁴²	Food Insecure Individuals ⁴³	Three Meals a Day (TMAD) Goal	Meals Distributed	Percent of TMAD Goal	Meals To Meet Goal ⁴⁴
Franklin	8.8%	2,910	492,000	353,101	72%	138,900
Bellingham	8.9%	1,510	256,000	174,300	68%	81,700
Medway	9.0%	1,190	202,000	151,300	75%	50,700

⁴⁰ <https://www.gbfb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/FY-2021-Three-Meals-A-Day-Goal-Methodology.pdf>

⁴¹ <https://gbfb.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=470f46975951455785b85a26d478dfc5>

⁴² Food Insecurity Rate – The percent of the population who experienced food insecurity, a condition assessed in the Current Population Survey and initially represented in USDA food security reports. Food security means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Feeding America uses state level household food insecurity rates to then estimate food insecurity for individuals at the county and sub-county level

⁴³ The number of Food Insecure Individuals for each county subdivision – i.e. city or town – was estimated by multiplying the food insecurity rate by the total population, from the Five Year American Community Survey Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates, and rounded to the nearest ten

⁴⁴ The Meal Gap, the total number of meals needed to provide “Three Meals A Day” for each food insecure individual, for each county subdivision was estimated by dividing the total food-budget shortfall by the weighted cost per meal for the county in which the county subdivision is located and then rounded to the nearest hundred. Price Index / Local Cost of Food Index - A number used to indicate relative differences in prices across geographies. In the case of this report, the index for each county is equal to the cost of a standard market basket of goods in that county divided by the average market basket cost across the U.S. assessed by The Nielsen Company.

o Food-budget Shortfall - The weekly (or annual) additional dollars that food insecure individuals report needing to meet their food needs, based on findings in the USDA’s 2017 Current Population Survey.

o Weighted Cost Per Meal - A local estimate of meal costs calculated by multiplying the national average meal cost by the county-level food cost price index for the specific geographic area.

Income as Percent of Federal Poverty Level ⁴⁵

Income as Percent of Federal Poverty Level ⁴⁶	Franklin Residents below FPL	MetroWest Region Residents below FPL	State of Massachusetts
50% FPL	759	9,860	321,641
125% FPL	1,583	30,609	882,818
150% FPL	1,825	39,705	1,074,316
185% FPL	2,600	53,651	1,356,990
200% FPL	2,887	58,092	1,476,988
300% FPL	5,224	101,102	2,275,865
400% FPL	7,926	144,754	3,068,783
500% FPL	11,300	191,507	3,792,399

Federal Poverty Levels⁴⁷

Persons in family/household	2021 Poverty guideline
1	\$12,880
2	\$17,420
3	\$21,960
4	\$26,500
5	\$31,040
6	\$35,580
7	\$40,120
8	\$44,660
For families with more than 8 person, add \$4,540 for each additional person.	

⁴⁵ Federal Poverty Level(FPL) is defined as the amount of annualized income earned by a household, below which they would be eligible to receive certain welfare benefits. It is calculated comparing pre-tax cash income against a threshold that is set at three times the cost of a minimum food diet in 1963 and adjusted for family size. Source Table S1701, US Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates “*” indicates a margin of error >35% of the estimate

⁴⁶ Federal Poverty Level(FPL) is defined as the amount of annualized income earned by a household, below which they would be eligible to receive certain welfare benefits. It is calculated comparing pre-tax cash income against a threshold that is set at three times the cost of a minimum food diet in 1963 and adjusted for family size. Source Table S1701, US Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates “*” indicates a margin of error >35% of the estimate

⁴⁷ <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-federal-register-references/2021-poverty-guidelines>

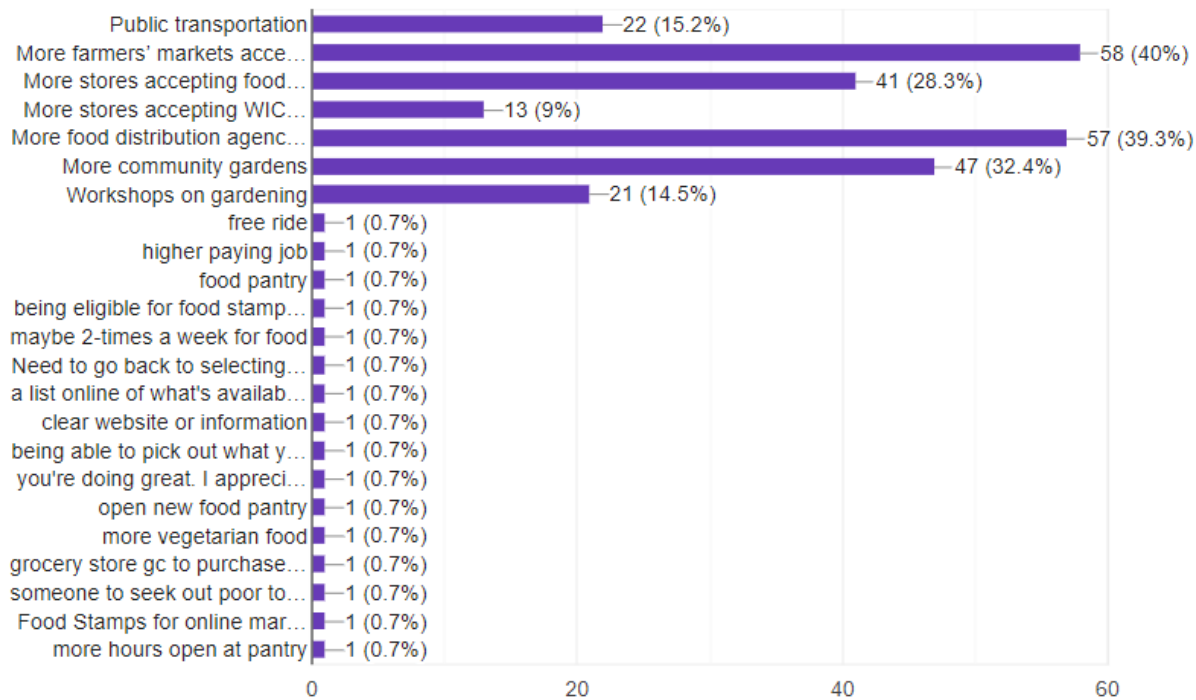
Appendix 4: Client Survey Results

In summer 2021, FFP gave a detailed paper survey to clients to complete in private at home. The survey was 21 questions long and respondents received a \$10 grocery store gift card if they completed and returned it. A total of 158 households completed the survey. When available, comments are compared to a 2016 FFP survey of 151 clients.

1. Which of the following would help you get the food you need? Choose all that apply.



145 responses

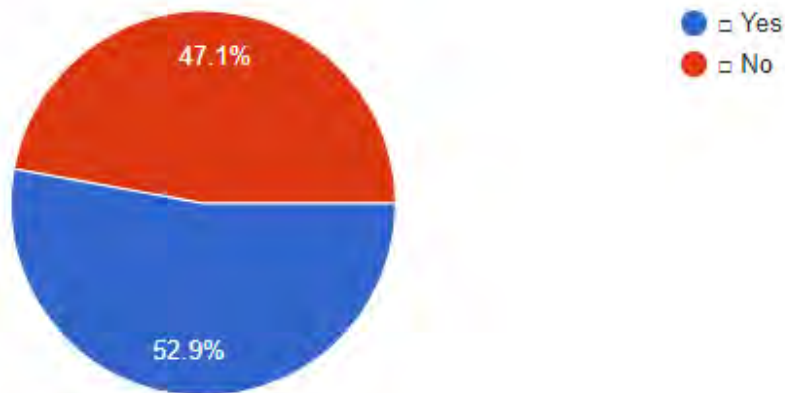


Write-in answers:

A list online of what's available so that what we get will be used, less wasted
Being able to pick out what you need
Clear website or information
Food pantry
Food Stamps for online markets, food gift card like Franklin First
Free ride
Grocery store gift card to purchase individual household needs
Higher paying job
Maybe 2 times a week for food
More hours open at pantry
More vegetarian food
Need to go back to selecting foods and products instead of getting bags already filled
Open new food pantry
Someone to seek out poor too proud to come in, deliver sometimes
You're doing great. I appreciate everything

2. Do you or any member of your household receive Food Stamps/SNAP?

157 responses

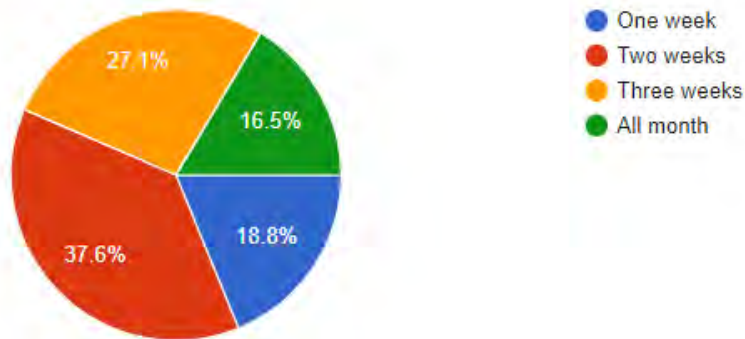


FFP SNAP Recipients: 2016 vs 2021

SNAP	2016	2021	Percent change
Yes	44.1%	52.9%	+8.8
No	55.9%	47.1%	-8.8

3. If Yes, approximately how many weeks of the month do your food stamps cover what you need to eat?

85 responses

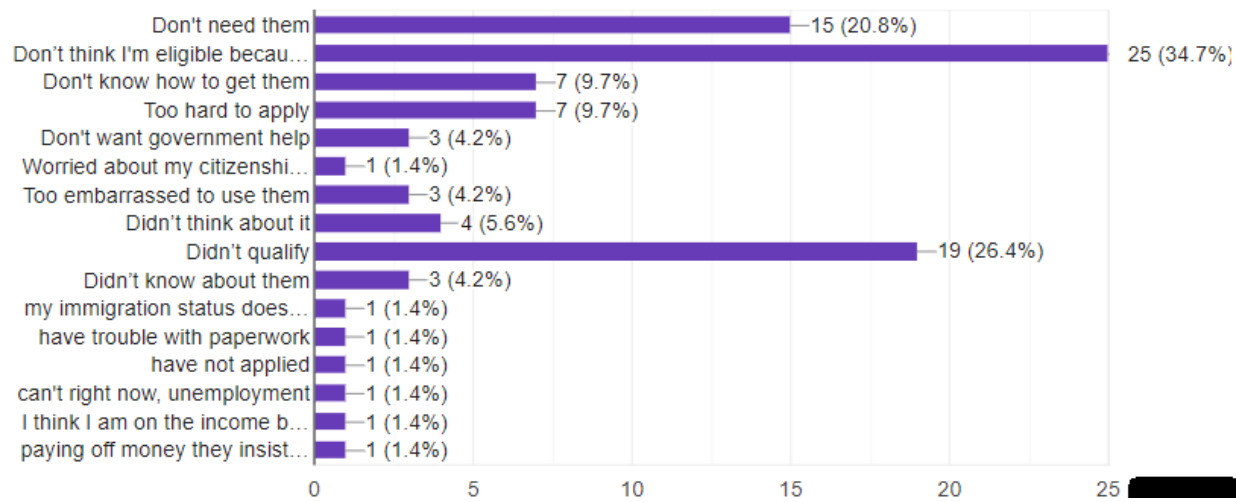


	2016	2021	Percent change
1 week	27.0%	18.8%	-8.2
2 weeks	27.0%	37.6%	+10.6
3 weeks	34.9%	27.1%	-7.8
4 weeks	11.1%	16.5%	+5.4

4. If No, what is the main reason you are not currently receiving SNAP?



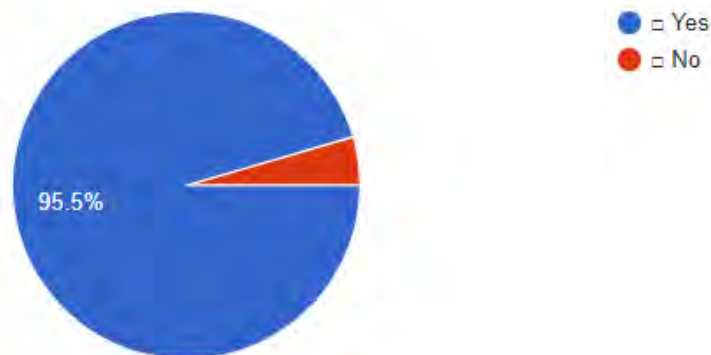
72 responses



	2016	2021	Percent change
Don't need	25.6%	20.8%	-4.8
Don't think I'm eligible because of income	20.5%	34.7%	+14.2
Didn't qualify	33.3%	26.4%	-6.9
Don't know how to get them	2.6%	9.7%	+7.1
Too hard to apply	2.6	9.7%	+7.1
Don't want gov't help	0	4.2%	+4.2
Worried about citizenship	0	1.4%	+1.4
Too embarrassed	0	4.25%	+4.25
Didn't think about it	2.6%	5.6%	+3.0
Didn't know about them	2.6%	4.2%	+1.6
Others need it more	10.3%	question not asked on 2021 survey	

5. Is this pantry providing you with the foods you need to prepare nutritious meals?

155 responses



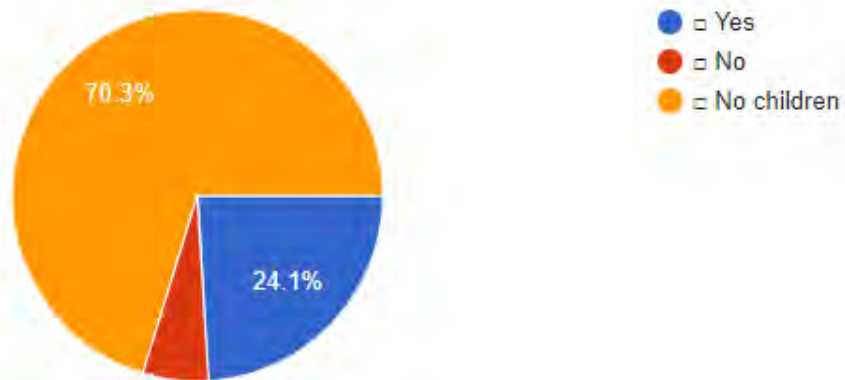
6. If No, what do you need?

25 responses

- More produce
- Need more than pasta, cereal, rice. More veggies, fruits, yogurts, dairy, cheeses, meats
- Yes, but we need more protein
- More choices of frozen veggies and diabetic snacks
- We have a lot of dietary restrictions; food needs to be as basic as possible. Cannot use canned food.
- Whole milk
- More vegetables, milk, juices, desserts, more food - maybe 2 items weekly
- More variety of frozen veggies- NOT canned
- Could use more staples – flour, sugar, salt, baking powder, baking soda, yeast
- Would be nice to have boxed spinach, celery, etc.
- Sweet potato, cereal, pasta sauce, onions, no carbs
- It is a huge help but we would like more low carb items
- More fresh food/meats, household staples – sugar, spices, baking ingredients
- Protein, healthier, low carb, low sodium, gluten free
- Bread, hamburger rolls
- Maybe more dairy
- Especially love the fresh garden produce!!
- Yes, when I can pick out items; bags during pandemic were not conducive to my food needs, Really miss the in-person visits
- Move into your new building
- On special diet, need high protein, low carb foods
- Need more veg and fruits for medical nutritional needs
- More protein, less carbs
- More veggies
- More meat, chicken, fresh vegetables

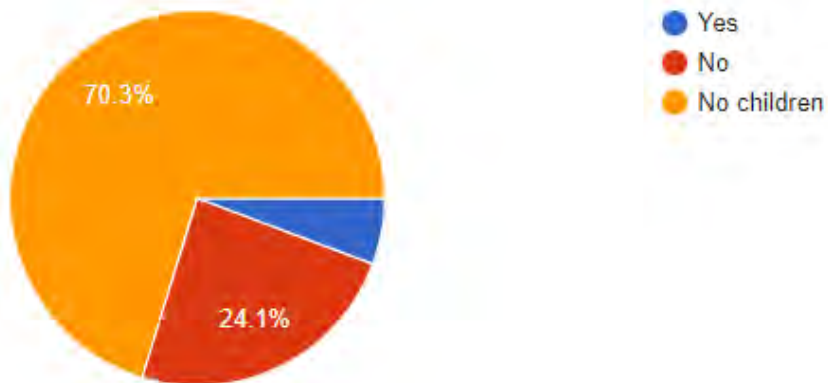
7. Do your children receive free or reduced school breakfast and lunch?

158 responses



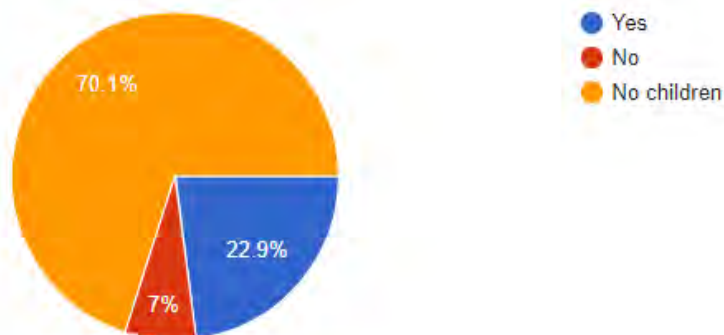
8. Do your children receive Weekend Backpacks from their school?

158 responses



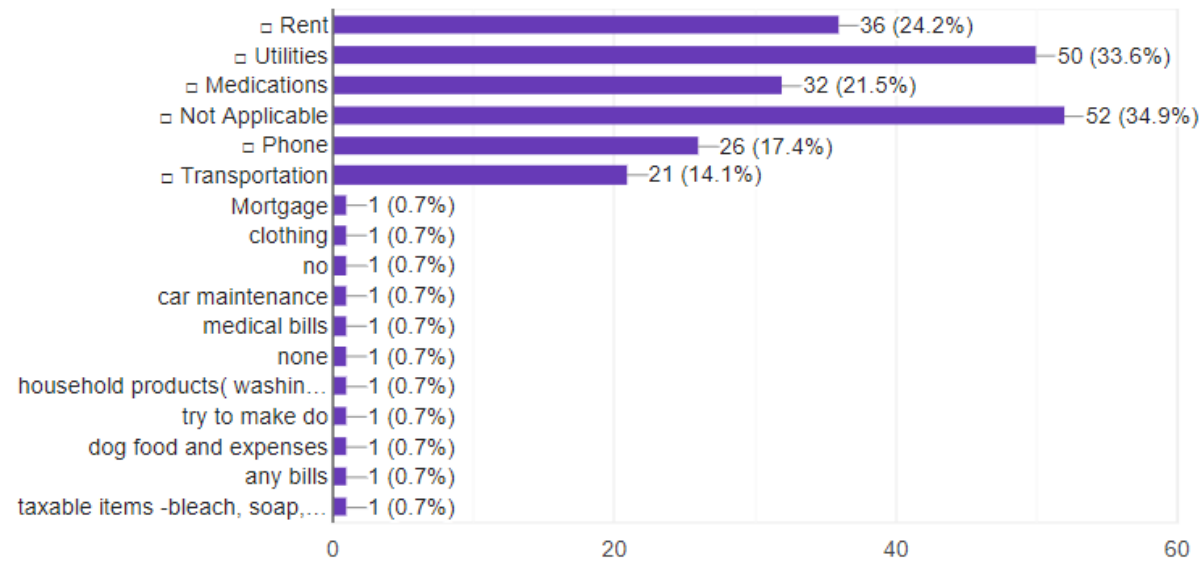
9. During school breaks (e.g. winter break, holidays, summer) do you need more free food in order to feed your children?

157 responses



10. "The months when money is tight I sometimes have to choose between food and ...":
(please mark all that apply)

149 responses

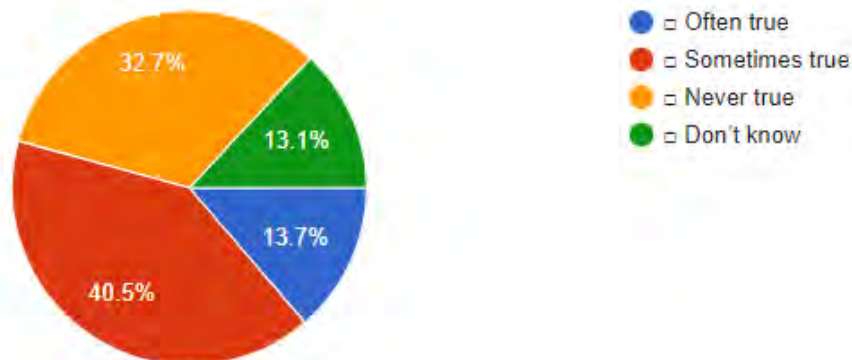


Comparison of 2016 to 2021:

	2016	2021	Percent change
Not Applicable	38.5%	34.9%	-3.6
Utilities	41.5%	33.6%	-7.9
Rent	31.9%	24.2%	-7.7
Medications	21.5%	21.5%	0
Phone	18.5%	17.4%	-1.1
Transportation	17%	14.1%	-2.9
Other	6.7%	7.4%	+0.7

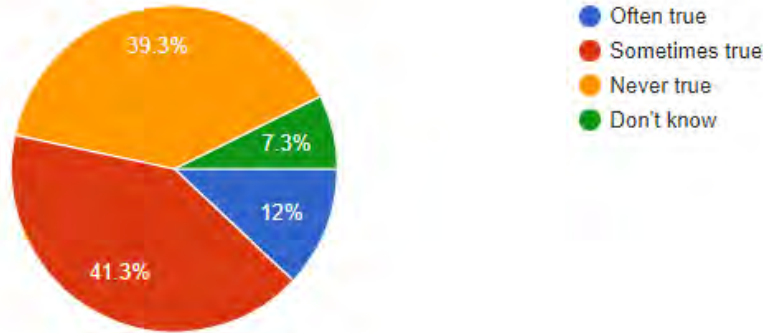
11. "We worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more."

153 responses



12. "In the last 12 months, the food that I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have money to get more."

150 responses

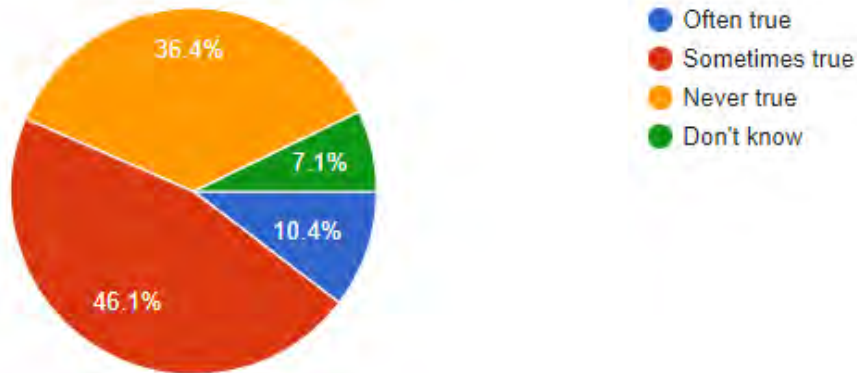


Comparison of 2016 and 2021

	2016	2021	Percent change
Often true	23.7%	12.0%	-11.7
Sometimes true	46.7%	41.3%	-5.4
Never true	24.4%	39.3%	+14.9
Don't know	5.2%	7.3%	+2.1

13. In the last 12 months, I couldn't afford to eat healthy meals."

154 responses

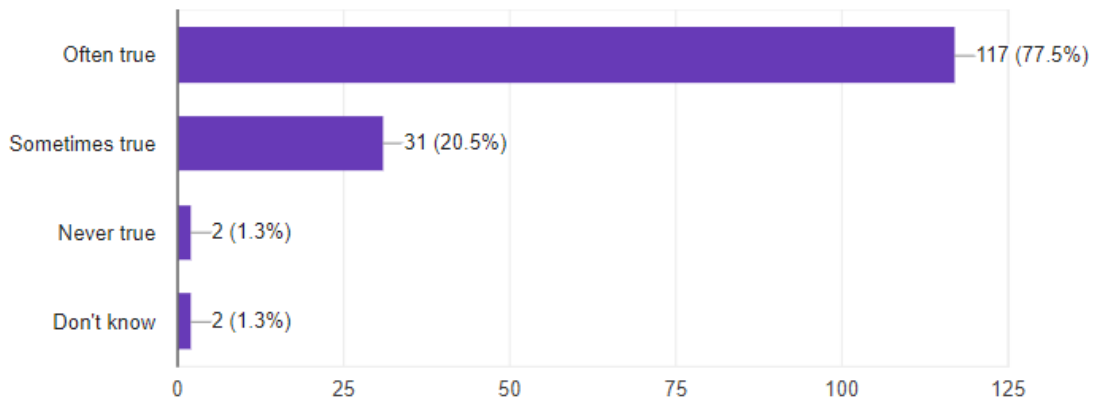


	2016	2021	Percent change
Often true	20.7%	10.4%	-10.3
Sometimes true	46.7%	46.1%	-0.7
Never true	31.1%	36.4%	+5.3
Don't know	1.5%	7.1%	+5.6

14. "The food I received through the Franklin Food Pantry program made a difference in meeting our weekly meal needs."

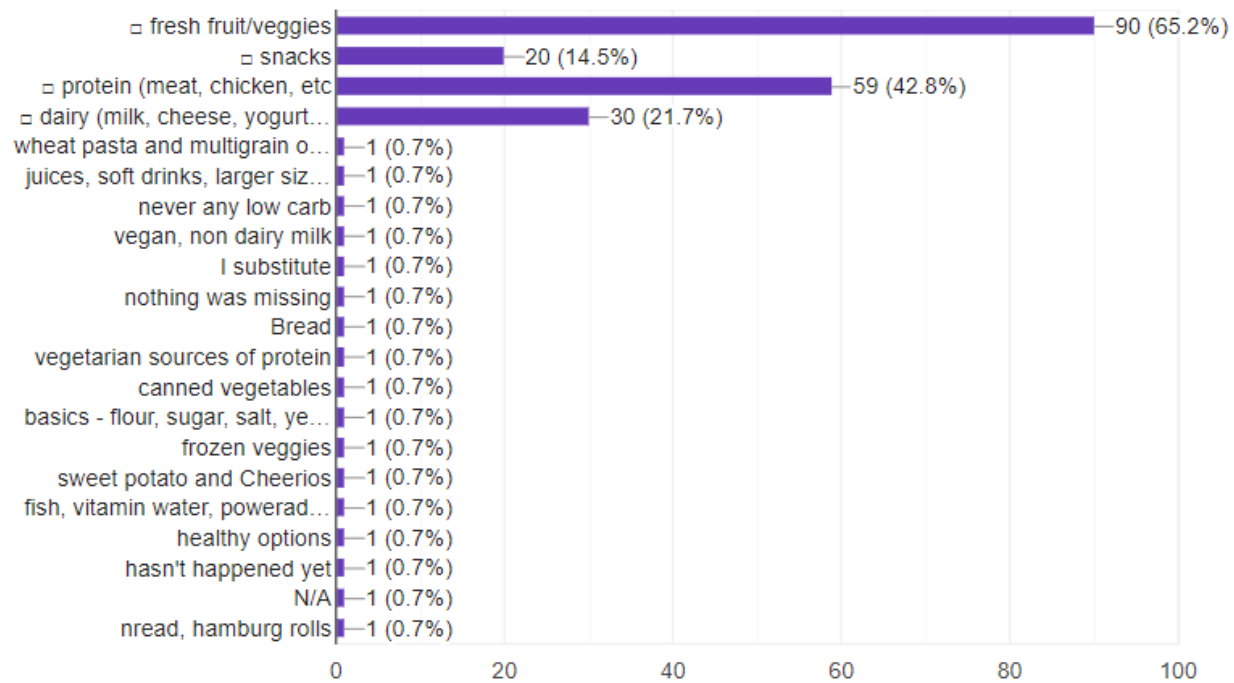


151 responses



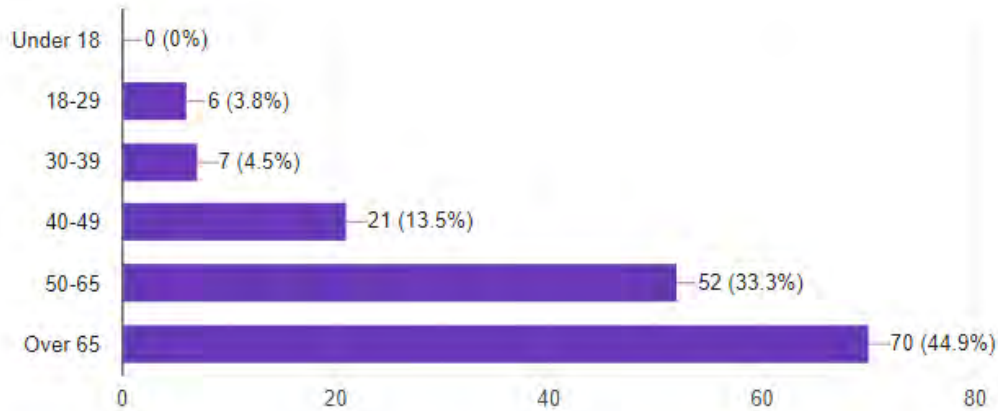
15. When there has not been enough food, what food was missing?

138 responses



16. My age is:

156 responses



Comparison of age of survey respondents

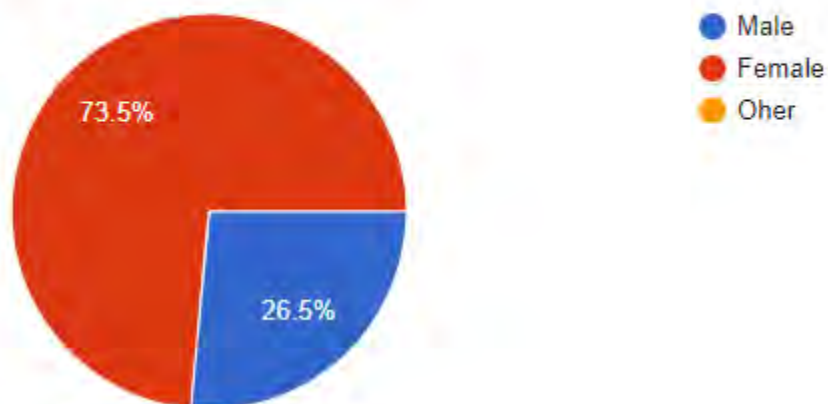
	2016	2021	Percent change
18-29	2.5%	3.8%	+1.3
30-39	9.0%	4.5%	-4.5
40-49	21.3%	13.5%	-7.8
50-65	43.9%	33.3%	-10.6
Over 65	23.2%	44.9%	+21.7

Comparison of age of registered clients

	2016	2021	Percent change
18-29	1.2%	4.5%	+3.3
30-39	7.3%	12.5%	+5.2
40-49	19.1%	13.0%	-6.1
50-65	39.6%	39.3%	-0.3
Over 65	32.8%	30.8%	-2.0

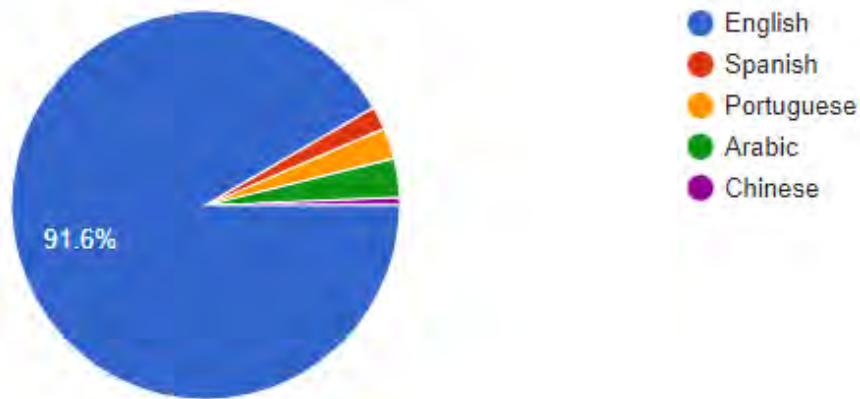
17. I am:

155 responses



18. My preferred language is:

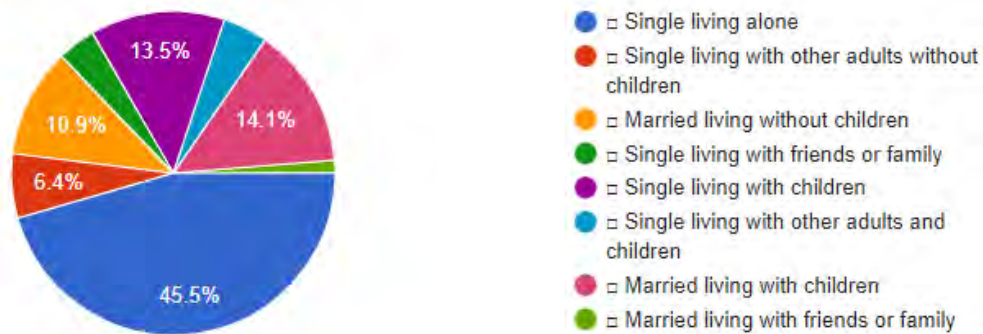
155 responses



While the percent of non-English speakers is small, it does represent an emerging diverse population settling in Franklin and utilizing FFP.

19. My current living situation:

156 responses

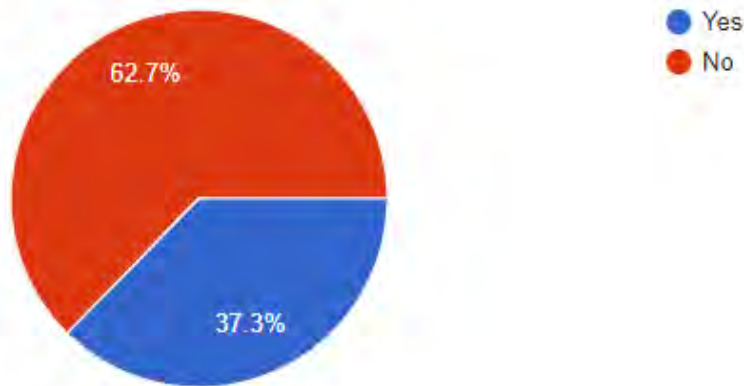


	2016	2021	Percent change
Single living alone	38.1%	45.5%	+7.4
Single living with children	20.6%	13.5%	-7.1
Single living with other adults w/o children	4.5%	6.4%	+1.9
Single living with other adults w/ children	10.3%	4.5%	-5.8
Single living with friends or family	Not asked	3.8%	
Married living with children	17.4%	14.1%	-3.3
Married living w/o children	9.0%	10.9%	+1.9
Married living with friends or family	Not asked	1.3%	

NOTE: The 2016 survey did not ask about single/married/living with friends or family so there are no comparisons. The increase in single people living alone is most likely based on survey respondent age skewing to over 65.

20. AT least one adult in my household is currently employed.

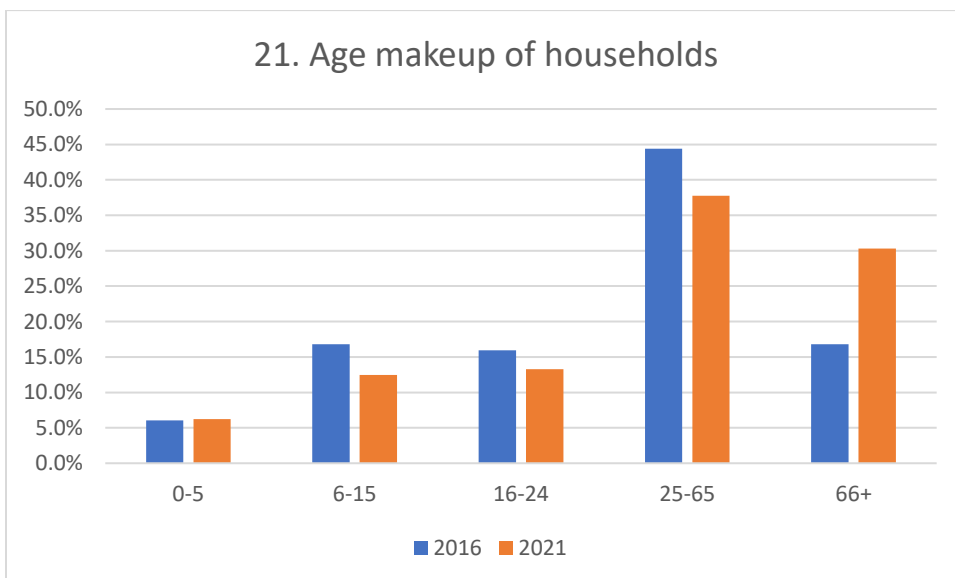
150 responses



	2016	2021	Percent change
Yes	42.3%	37.3%	-5
No	57.7%	62.7%	+5

21. Including yourself, how many from the following ages groups are in your household?

Age	2016	2021	Percent change
0-5	6.0%	6.2%	+0.2
6-15	16.85	12.4%	-4.4
16-24	15.9%	13.3%	-2.7
25-65	44.4%	37.8%	-6.6
66+	16.8%	30.3%	+13.5



NOTE: The significant increase in senior citizens responding to the 2021 survey is reflected.

Appendix 5: Question of the Week Results

Information was gathered from our existing clients with a dot survey “question of the week” geared towards gathering input from every client that came through the distribution line. There were 10 questions asked over 10 weeks in the summer of 2021.

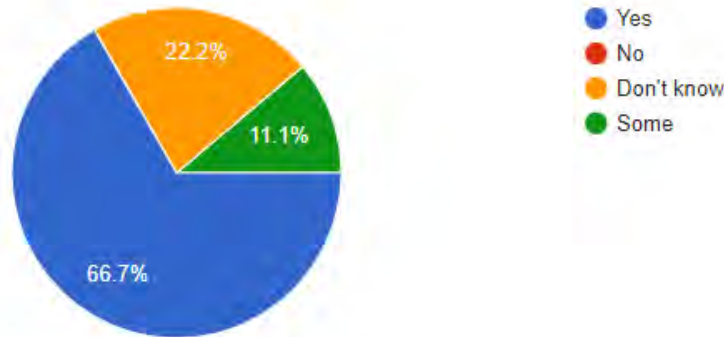
Goal	Question	Response	Recommendation/Action Taken
Increase access to healthy foods	Would you come to a FFP Farmer’s Market over the summer? Would you prefer Tuesday distribution, Thursday, Friday distribution?	35 - During Tues/Fri distribution 14 - Thurs AM separate from shopping 19 - either	Recommend: Client Farmer’s Market held at existing Tues/Fri distribution. Action: Community Garden volunteers harvested produce on Tuesday and Friday mornings, organized and portioned produce, and distribute produce and answer questions at end curb side distribution line. Evaluate expansion.
Increase choice	If we had an online order form or app, would you use it?	59 - Yes 34 - No 11 - Maybe	Recommend: evaluating online ordering options. Action: Initial research put on hold as in-person shopping reopened in October 2021 reevaluating in early 2022.
Assist with challenges other than food insecurity	Would you like assistance applying for public programs such as SNAP or local tax relief?	46 - Yes 22 - No 2 - Maybe	Recommend: offering assistance with public programs applications and connecting with clients about which resources they want to access. Action: In person office hours established. Evaluate expansion. Job Board posted inside.
Meet client needs	Are you happy with the amount of nonfood items given, such as shampoo, soap, detergent?	34 - Yes 4 - No	Recommend: continuing to offer these items. Action: Increased amounts offered when possible. Ensured that Amazon wish list is up to date to replenish inventory.
Reduce waste	If you receive food you can’t use or don’t like, do you return it, give it to someone else, or throw it out?	20 – return it 34 – give it away 1 – N/A	Recommend: encouraging clients to share with others if they cannot use an item in a prepacked bag. Action: Online ordering under evaluation as a way to increase choice and reduce waste.
Assist with challenges other than food insecurity	If we posted a list of resources or assistance agencies on our website, would that be helpful?	Based on earlier responses, we inferred this would be helpful	Recommend: sharing available resources online. Action: “Resources” section added to the FFP website and periodically update.
Increase access	Would weekend hours be helpful? Would you prefer or use weekend hours?	17 – Yes 16 – No 21 – N/A	Recommend: evaluating providing weekend hours once we have staff and volunteers available to run the program and have moved into our new building.

Increase access to the Covid-19 vaccine	Would you attend a Covid-19 Mobile Vaccine Clinic held onsite at FFP?	49 – Already vaccinated 5 – No 1 – Maybe 13 – Yes (many wanted access for kids or booster) 6 – Good Idea	Action: No need identified FFP did work with Edward M Kennedy CHC and Greater Boston Food Bank to provide at-home Covid-19 tests to clients.
Increase awareness of our services	We often get requests from media outlets for neighbor stories/interviews. Would you be willing to share your story?	26 – Yes 15 - No	Recommend: sharing neighbor stories to increase awareness and encourage others to use our services, volunteer or donate. Action: FFP will reach out to interested folks as opportunities arise.
Increase choice	In the fall, would you prefer drive up pre-packaged distribution, in person shopping OR a client order form?	Drive-Up – 18 In-Person – 27 Online order – 2 Anything - 4	Recommend: a mixture of distribution models would benefit our neighbors. Action: In October 2021, FFP launched its first-ever hybrid model by scheduling in person shopping on Thursdays and Fridays while still offering curbside distribution on Tuesday days and evenings. Continue to evaluate distribution models that maximize choice but also account for ever changing Covid-19 landscape.

Appendix 6: Partner Survey Results

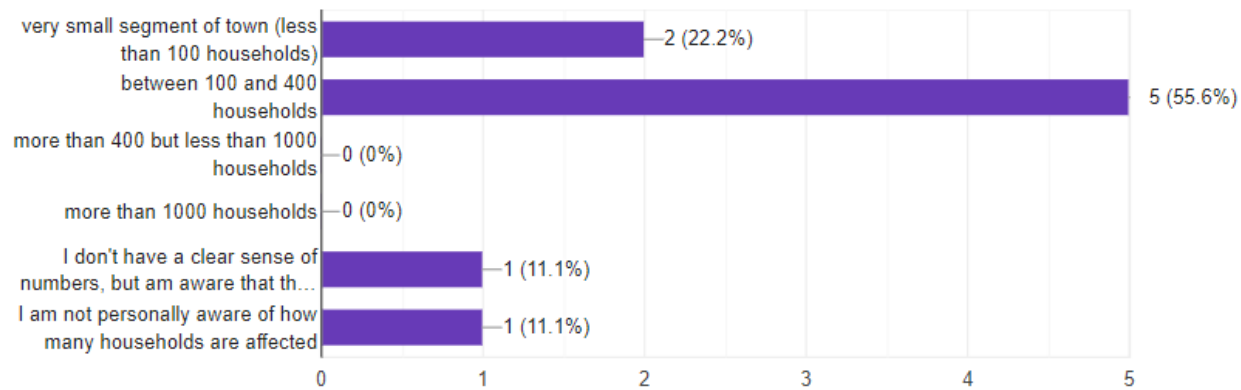
1. Do you think that many households in the Franklin community have a problem with food security?

9 responses



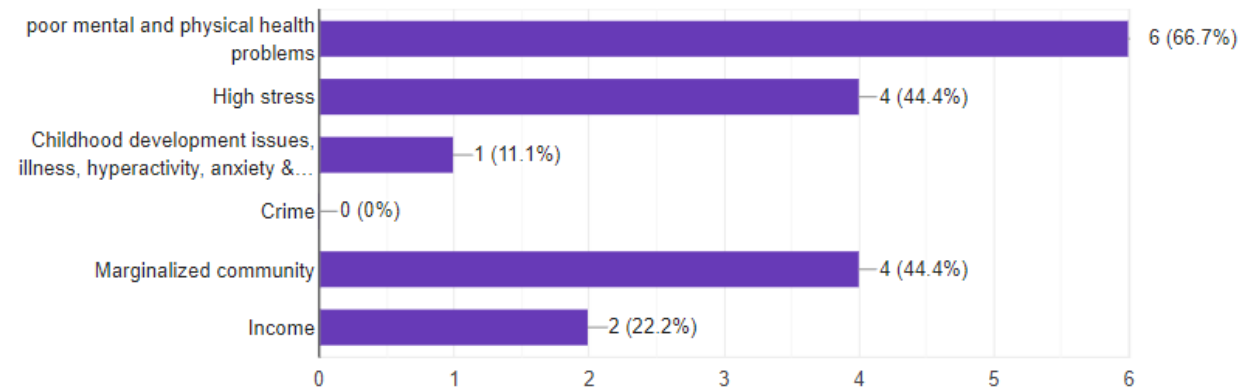
2. What is the extent of the problem that you are aware of?

9 responses



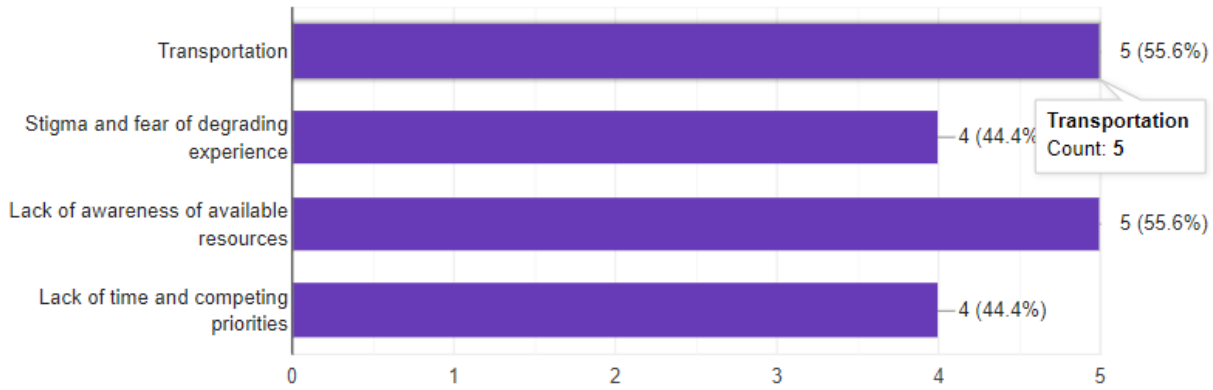
3. What do you think are the biggest problems related to food security at the community level?

9 responses



4. What do you see as the primary barriers to people accessing the food they need in Franklin?

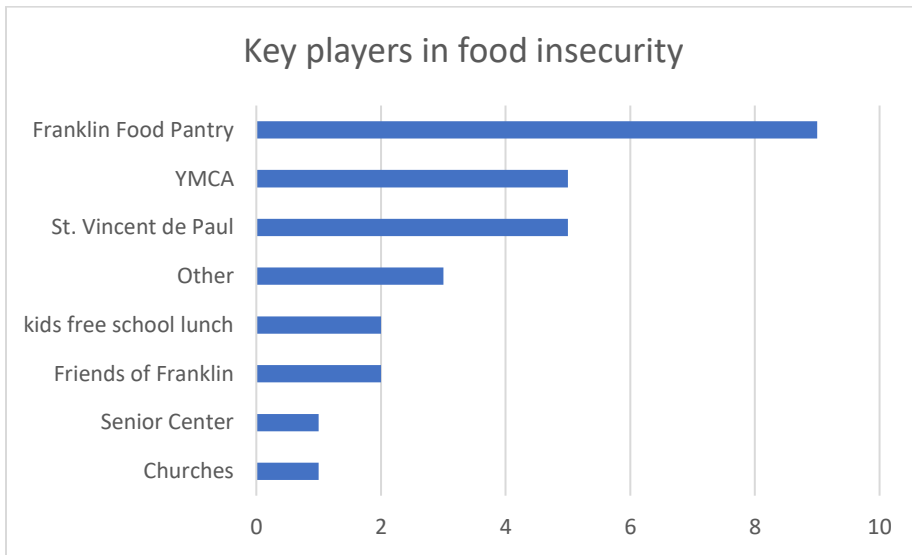
9 responses



5. What resources are you aware of in Franklin for those suffering from food insecurity? Who are the key players?

9 responses

- Food Pantry, St. Vincent de Paul, Friends of Franklin
- FFP/ SNAP / WIC
- YMCA, Food Pantry, Churches.
- Food Pantry, SVdP, High School , YMCA
- Franklin Food Pantry, YMCA, St Vincent de Paul food Pantry, School supplement
- Food Pantry, St. Vincent dePaul, Friends of Franklin
- FFP, Hockomock YMCA, St Vincent dePaul Society, Franklin Senior Center
- Food Pantry
- The YMCA, the Franklin Food Pantry, WIC.



NOTE: The above listing accurately captures local organizations offering aid for those suffering from food insecurity. We see that there is no single local organization on which individuals rely. It is encouraging to know that these organizations exist and are known by end users and other partner organizations.

6. Do you think those who are in need in the community are aware of existing resources?

9 responses



7. Are there any other strategies that you believe would help people get the food they need, either in the short and/or long term?

6 responses

Always dreamed of Neighbor Brigade adopting families in need with a cooking cooperative program to get more healthy meals on the tables of those in need.

Info sharing between above listed food sources, school system, churches, FH Authority

Deliver directly to houses.

more delivery services, longer shopping hours on multiple days per week

Working with schools, social services agencies, churches, and physicians

I think the pop up pantry model is a huge step in the right direction.

8. Are there specific populations who are hesitant or unable to access existing resources? (i.e. cultural, homebound, etc.) And if so, why?

4 responses

Yes, I believe there are specific populations that are unable to access due to transportation or work schedule issues.

With Neighbor Brigade we find all are hesitant to ask for help personally, unless a friend/family member encourages it.

Disabled and elderly who don't have transportation

difficulty in asking for or receiving help

9. Does your organization have a committee or team that works on social or community issues?

9 responses



10. If yes, what is the mission of that committee or team?

4 responses

To engage and develop a greater part in DEI

Information and referral to Social Service agencies for Franklin residents

technically, I am a team of one but pull in others as needed

Our Food Access Team is part of our Social Action Service Initiative. The mission and vision of this program area is to position our YMCA as an organization of choice to coordinate and provide social support services through community partnerships for vulnerable and at-risk members of our community through supportive programming and creating a culture of well-being.

11. What programs, resources or supports does your organization have for giving aid to low-income people? (i.e. food pantry, food bags, SNAP assist, rent/fuel assistance, etc.)

9 responses

- Meals on Wheels, assistance with applying for SNAP, emergency food bags
- Rent/fuel assistance, and food/gifts for the holidays
- fuel assistance, SNAP, food pantry referral, housing applications, healthcare applications
- NB helps families in immediate short term crisis with neighborly help until people are back on their feet or being supported properly.
- Fuel Assist through FIC & SVD
- food bags, SNAP assistance (as of October), emergency gift cards, financial aid/scholarship to our YMCA, back to school supplies, holiday help.
- Fuel, rent, food
- We evaluate need and so best how to help those in need
- provide caring meals on a temporary basis, limited home repairs, assistance with introduction to FFP or social worker at Franklin Senior Center to apply for assistance, information to individuals in need including Pathways to a Better Life, Milford area Temporary, Emergency Homeless Shelter during the winter

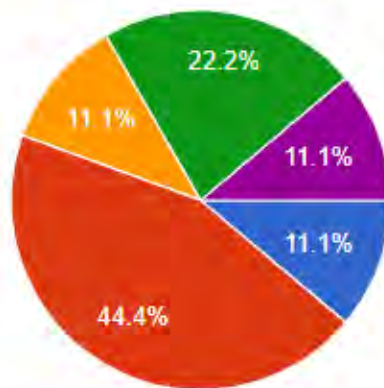
12. Does your organization collaborate with any emergency food organizations? If yes, please elaborate under "Other..."

9 responses



13. How many members do you have in your organization?

9 responses



- less than 25
- between 25 and 200
- between 200 and 1000
- over 1000
- We don't really have "members", only volunteers during the holiday delivery season.

14. Please let us know if there is anything that the Franklin Food Pantry can do to support you and/or the mission of your organization.

6 responses

Keep doing what you're doing! Great job!

How about a Presentation about the Pantry - here at the Senior Ctr for our Seniors

Thank you!

We love working with you guys!

We are already collaborating with the Food Pantry

We have a partnership with the FFP and the pantry has always come through for us when we have a member in need.