Nutrition Environment Food Pantry Assessment Tool (NEFPAT+)

Arizona SNAP-Ed Proctor Guide

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Questions? All questions regarding this Proctor Guide or the NEFPAT+ in general can be directed to Anvi Bhakta (Food Systems Evaluator):
anvi24@arizona.edu

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The NEFPAT+ at a Glance

What is the NEFPAT+?

- The NEFPAT+ is an environmental scan developed by University of Illinois Extension. The tool is used to evaluate a pantry's environment, practices, and policies related to nutrition and health.
- The tool helps LIAs work with their food pantry partner to identify strengths and ways to improve the overall healthfulness and nutrition of the food pantry environment.
- The objectives assessed include: Fruit & Vegetable Variety, Nutritious Foods from each Food Group, Client Choice Models, Marketing, Promotion & Nudges, Policies & Guidelines, Health & Inclusion in Pantry Operations, and Pantry Partnerships.
- The NEFPAT+ also measures indicators included in the National SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework.

nutrition pantry program

NPP Participants

If you and your food pantry partner participate in the Nutrition Pantry Program (NPP) with Leah's Pantry, **you will still follow Arizona SNAP-Ed guidelines outlined in this Proctor Guide.**

Completing the NEFPAT+

1 Engage with your food pantry partner:

Prior to completing the NEFPAT+, it is important to build a relationship and reach out to the Food Pantry Manager to ensure their interest in the assessment and action planning. Food Pantry Managers should be engaged at every stage to ensure the intervention and strategies align with the food pantry's mission, values, goals, and capacity, and ultimately lead to changes the pantry can sustain on their own.

2 Training:

Make sure you have completed the NEFPAT+ training and passed the Certification Quiz with 100%.

3 Completing the NEFPAT+

After completing the certification quiz, you may conduct the NEFPAT+ when you and your pantry partner are ready. You are welcome to work *alongside* a food pantry staff member/volunteer to complete the NEFPAT+. This additional support opens the opportunity for conversation around the NEFPAT+, allows you to ask any questions you may have about the food pantry, and ensures you are on the same page. However, given the time limitations and capacity of food pantry staff/volunteers, this may not be possible. Regardless of whether you complete the assessment yourself or alongside a staff member/volunteer, **you as the certified staff person, must be the one to fill out the NEFPAT+.** The NEFPAT+ includes the following sections:

- **Objective 1:** Fruit and Vegetable Variety
- **Objective 2:** Nutritional Foods from each MyPlate Food Group
- **Objective 3:** Client Choice Models
- **Objective 4:** Marketing, Promotion & Nudges
- **Objective 5:** Pantry Guidelines & Policies
- **Objective 6:** Health & Inclusion in Pantry Operations
- **Objective 7:** Pantry Partnerships

3 Completing the NEFPAT+ (continued):

Method of completion:

- **Bring a hard copy of NEFPAT+.** Print and fill out the hard copy of the NEFPAT+ **(Appendix A)** while at the food pantry. You can also fill it out electronically, if you are allowed to bring a laptop into the pantry.

Tips to keep in mind:

- Review the NEFPAT+ before arriving at the pantry.
- Ensure you give yourself at least one hour to complete the NEFPAT+
- Take extra notes of your observations and photos. Clients and pantry personnel should not be photographed without permission.
- Some questions on the NEFPAT+ may require pantry staff knowledge. It is okay to reach out to them before or after completion of the assessment to answer these questions.
- Choose a distribution day to best answer certain questions--generally, the earlier the better!
- Consider seasonality when you conduct the NEFPAT+.

NEFPAT+ Instruction Guide:

- If you have any questions about the content of the tool after reviewing the NEFPAT+, we encourage you to explore the **NEFPAT+ Technical Assistance Guide** (**Appendix B).** The guide provides instructions, clarifications, and explanations for each item within the tool. The details are meant to provide guidance to help you complete the assessment.
- After completing the NEFPAT+, the guide also provides action planning ideas for each item on the assessment.

4 Submitting the NEFPAT+:

After completing the NEFPAT+, you can either submit the hardcopy or fill out the fillable PDF. Submit to SET by:

EMAIL: azhzevaluation@arizona.edu

nutrition pantry program

If you and your food pantry partner participate in the NPP, follow the same submission guidelines to SET. We will send your results to Leah's Pantry.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Answer
Can I assess pantries in my community that I am not sure I plan to partner with?	We recommend that you first ensure that you have the staff capacity to assess the pantry(ies) with which you have a built partnership. If you do not have an active partnership with a pantry during the time of your annual evaluation plan finalization, you may add it to your plan later in the fiscal year after a pantry partnership has been developed.
What if the pantry has a certain food item unavailable on the day I conduct the NEFPAT+, though the staff tells me that it is generally available?	Answer the NEFPAT+ based on what you observe **on the day** of your visit.
What if some pantries I assess participate in NPP, and others do not?	Submit all NEFPATs to SET. We will share NPP-participating assessments to Leah's Pantry if you noted this on your NEFPAT.
I'm interested in participating in the NPP or want to learn more. How do I start?	**Appendix D** includes detailed information about NPP. You may connect with the Food Systems Specialist with the State Implementation Team to get more information.

Appendices

Appendix A: NEFPAT+ Hard Copy

Appendix B: NEFPAT+ Technical Assistance Guide

Appendix C: Action Planning Template

Appendix D: Nutrition Pantry Program Resources

Appendix A:
NEFPAT+ Hard Copy

Nutrition Environment Food Pantry Assessment Tool Plus

NEFPAT+

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. This material is funded by the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program. College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences University of Illinois | USDA | Local Extension Councils Cooperating For permission to reprint, revise, or otherwise use, contacteatmovesave@illinois.edu.

ASSESSOR NAME: _____ DATE: _____

ASSESSOR EMAIL: _____

DOES THIS PANTRY PARTICIPATE IN THE NUTRITION PANTRY PROGRAM (NPP)? ☐

Pantry Information

PANTRY NAME: _____

PANTRY ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

PANTRY CONTACT NAME: _____

CONTACT INFO (PHONE, EMAIL, ETC.): _____

_____

1. IS THIS FOOD PANTRY A MEMBER OF A FOOD BANK? **YES / NO** IF YES, WHICH? _____

2. DOES THE PANTRY RESTRICT WHO CAN ACCESS ITS SERVICES (E.G. BY ZIP CODE, STUDENTS-ONLY, OLDER ADULTS ONLY, VETERANS ONLY, OR OTHERS)? **YES / NO**

   IF YES, HOW? _____

3. HOW FREQUENTLY IS THE PANTRY OPEN? _____

4. HOW OFTEN CAN CLIENTS SHOP FOR FOOD? _____

5. IS PUBLIC TRANSIT AVAILABLE NEAR THE PANTRY? **YES / NO**

   IF YES, HOW CLOSE IS IT (IN MILES)? _____

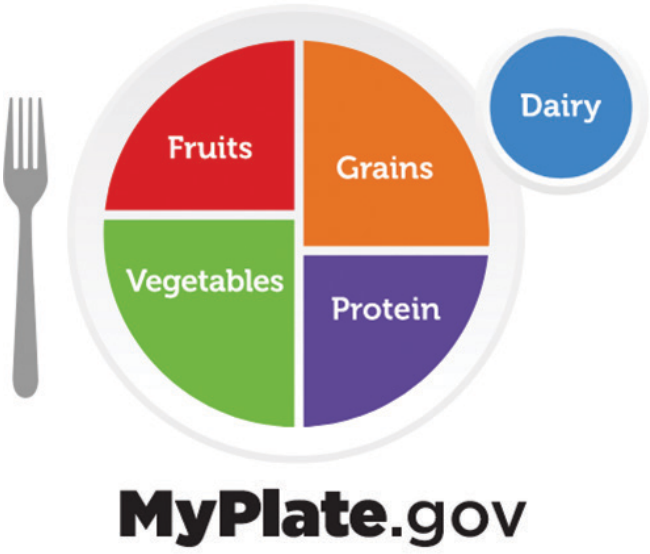
6. NUMBER OF PEOPLE SERVED BY FOOD PANTRY EACH MONTH:

	TOTAL	DON'T KNOW
HOUSEHOLDS		
INDIVIDUALS*		

*If total number of individuals is not available, multiply number of households by 2.0 (national average, size of SNAP households, FY18, found at ***https: //www.fns.usda.gov/SNAP-household-state-averages***)

Introduction

The goal of NEFPAT+ is to help food pantries identify ways they promote health and nutrition in their pantry, and to get ideas for the future. It can also be used to track a pantry's progress over time. ***The goal is not to achieve a perfect score.*** On-site observations should be made just before (or during) food distributions. Scorers should award points based on visual observations and information given by staff, volunteers, and pantry documents.



The NEFPAT+ uses the term ***Nutritious*** to identify health-promoting foods. Objective 2 includes the list of foods considered ***Nutritious***. This list is referred to in Objectives 3, 4, and 6. The list is informed by various sources, listed on page 7. Scorers do not need to have prior knowledge of these sources to complete the NEFPAT+.

MyPlate is a simple nutrition guide to help Americans select foods and plan meals that support health, even on a budget. The five food groups include fruits, vegetables, proteins, grains, and dairy. The MyPlate graphic is included as a reference any time MyPlate is referenced in an Objective. Want to see how your pantry is doing? Complete a NEFPAT+ today!

Scored Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1

Offers a Variety of Fruits and Vegetables

READ ME FIRST: All scores are based on foods ***present*** at the time of scoring. Count all forms of fruits and vegetables including fresh, canned, dried, frozen, and juiced. Only count each type of fruit or vegetable once, e.g., "apples, applesauce, dried apples, and apple juice = one fruit" or "tomatoes, tomato sauce, sun-dried tomatoes, and tomato juice = one vegetable." Do not count items unsafe to eat like rusty or dented cans, frostbitten frozen foods, unsealed packages of dried foods, or fresh foods with mold or spoilage. If needed, use the **MyPlate Fruits & Vegetables List** from the NEFPAT+ Toolkit for reference.

1a. ☐ **Has at least five different fruits available.**

1b. ☐ **Has at least five different vegetables available.**

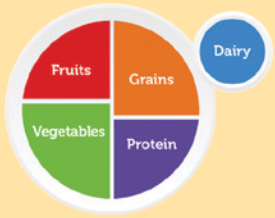
1c. ☐ **Has more than 10 different fruits and vegetables available.**

_____ Write total number of boxes marked (3 points possible)

OBJECTIVE 2

Offers Nutritious Foods from each MyPlate Food Group

READ ME FIRST: Objective 2 is the list of Nutritious foods. All scores are based on foods present at the time of scoring. **At least one item should be found for each checkbox.** Use information on the front of the food label or the Nutrition Facts Panel. Do not count items unsafe to eat like rusty or dented cans, frostbitten frozen foods, unsealed packages of dried foods, or fresh foods with mold or spoilage.



2a. Fruits | *count items packaged in water or 100% juice and those with no added sugar or sauces*

- ☐ **Fresh**
- ☐ **Frozen**
- ☐ **Canned, jarred, or pouches**
- ☐ **Dried/dehydrated**
- ☐ **100% juice**

2b. Vegetables | *count items with no added sauces, no added salt, or labeled low sodium (≤140mg sodium per serving)*

- ☐ Fresh
- ☐ Frozen
- ☐ Canned, jarred, or pouches
- ☐ Dried/dehydrated

2c. Animal-based Protein | *count fresh and frozen items with no breading and packaged meats packed in water*

- ☐ Whole or ground lean cuts (sirloin (90/10), chuck (80/20), round (85/15), venison, skinless poultry)
- ☐ Fish or shellfish
- ☐ Canned, jarred, or pouches of chicken or fish
- ☐ Eggs

2d. Plant-Based Protein | *count items with no added salt, seasoning, or labeled low sodium (≤140mg sodium per serving)*

- ☐ Dried beans, dried lentils, or canned beans
- ☐ Nuts and seeds
- ☐ Tofu, tempeh, or other soy or vegetable-based blends

2e. Grains | *count items with whole grain as the first ingredient or labeled a Good or Excellent source of fiber (≥3g dietary fiber per serving)*

- ☐ Whole grain breads—bread, rolls, whole grain pancake mix, bagels, pita, tortillas, etc.
- ☐ Whole grains—brown/wild rice, barley, plain oats, bulgur, quinoa, whole wheat flour, etc.
- ☐ Whole wheat pasta
- ☐ Cereal

2f. Dairy | *fresh or shelf-stable*

- ☐ Reduced fat (2%), low-fat (1%) or non-fat (skim) milk—unflavored
- ☐ Low-fat or non-fat yogurt (≤3g fat per serving)
- ☐ Low-fat or non-fat cheese or cottage cheese (≤3g fat per serving)
- ☐ Non-Dairy Alternatives (e.g., soy milk, almond milk), unsweetened plain or unsweetened vanilla

_____ Write total number of boxes marked (24 points possible)

OBJECTIVE 3

Increase Client Choice for Nutritious Foods

READ ME FIRST: Objective 2 (above) is the list of foods considered ***Nutritious***. All scores are based on practices ***present*** at the time of scoring.

3a. **Uses client choice model—can include window, table, menu, online, or grocery store styles.**

- ☐ **Clients can choose which foods they want from at least one MyPlate food group**
- ☐ **Choice items include Nutritious foods**

3b. ☐ **Offers items from each of the five MyPlate food groups: fruits, vegetables, proteins, grains, dairy.**

3c. ☐ **Uses funds to buy Nutritious foods or encourages donations of Nutritious foods (e.g. distributes a list of suggested foods).**

3d. ☐ **Seeks fresh produce from local sources via gleaning, community gardens, having an onsite garden, farms, AmpleHarvest.org, or other approaches.**

3e. ☐ **Clients can shop for food more than once per month.**

_____ Write total number of boxes marked (6 points possible)

OBJECTIVE 4

Market, Promote, and Nudge Nutritious Foods

READ ME FIRST: Objective 2 (above) is the list of foods considered ***Nutritious***. All scores are based on practices ***present*** at the time of scoring.

4a. Uses signage to encourage selection of *Nutritious* foods and healthy lifestyles.

- ☐ **Point-of-decision signage to encourage the selection of specific items (small signs, stickers, symbols identifying nutritious items on shopping lists, shelf talkers, etc.)**
- ☐ **Signage promoting general healthy eating (MyPlate materials, posters, window stickers, a-frames, yard signs, shelf talkers with general messages, etc.)**

4b. ☐ ***Nutritious* foods are displayed before, in front of, or above other foods.**

4c. ☐ **At least one *Nutritious* food is included in a bundle to display items together as a meal or recipe. Bundles can be bagged, highlighted in a featured display, or placed on nearby shelves.**

4d. ☐ **Offers recipes to promote *Nutritious* foods to clients.**

4e. ☐ ***Nutritious* foods are easy to see and reach or are easy for clients to identify to volunteers.**

_____ Write total number of boxes marked (6 points possible)

OBJECTIVE 5

Has Guidelines for Food Safety, Nutrition, and Customer Service

READ ME FIRST: All scores are based on practices ***present*** at the time of scoring. Scorers should first review pantry documents and signage when scoring this section. If additional clarity is needed discuss practices with pantry personnel.

5a. ☐ **Ensures safe food handling and food distribution with signage, written guidelines, policies, or other practices.**

5b. **Has a written, implemented nutrition policy or guidelines. Includes:**

- ☐ **Statement of purpose**
- ☐ **An identified nutrition system to rank foods**
- ☐ **Foods to increase or promote**
- ☐ **Foods to limit or divert**
- ☐ **A strategy for sharing policy with volunteers and community**
- ☐ **A plan for reviewing policy at least once a year**

5c. **Has guidelines or practices that support customer service and inclusivity:**

- ☐ **Has a policy and/or training that outlines customer service and inclusion practices.**
- ☐ **Mission statement reflects commitment to inclusive practices.**
- ☐ **Online listing is up to date on platforms like Facebook, Google, food finder maps or others.**
- ☐ **Uses digital platforms to market services and/or available food.**

_____ Write total number of boxes marked (12 points possible)

OBJECTIVE 6

Prioritizes Health & Inclusion in Pantry Operations

READ ME FIRST: All scores are based on practices ***present*** at the time of scoring. Scorers should first review pantry documents and signage when scoring this section. If additional clarity is needed discuss practices with pantry personnel.

6a. ☐ Has a system in place to identify the nutritional value of foods received (SWAP, MyPlate, etc.).

6b. ☐ Uses labeling system to help clients find items for specific dietary needs (vegetarian, low sodium, diabetes friendly, gluten free, etc.).

6c. ☐ Offers food samples to promote Nutritious foods to clients.

6d. ☐ Pantry clients serve on pantry board or other decision-making groups within the pantry.

6e. Asks about and responds to client needs (surveys, conversation, intake forms, etc.) including:

- ☐ Culturally familiar food needs
- ☐ Specific dietary food needs
- ☐ Preferred languages for communication or materials
- ☐ Encourages donations or uses funds to buy foods specific to the needs identified

6f. Creates a welcoming and inclusive space:

- ☐ Signs and resources are written at middle school reading level or below
- ☐ Signs and resources are translated into languages of groups served
- ☐ Signs and resources use inclusive language and images

6g. Provides volunteer education (in-person, verbal, online, resource guides, etc.) on relevant topics:

- ☐ Nutrition (e.g., Hunger & Health, nudges, SWAP, etc.)
- ☐ Food safety (e.g., expiration dates, produce handling, First In/First Out, etc.)
- ☐ Customer service (e.g., culturally sensitive communication, respectful service, etc.)

_____ **Write total number of boxes marked (14 points possible)**

OBJECTIVE 7

Promotes Partnerships & Provides Additional Resources

READ ME FIRST: All scores are based on practices ***present*** at the time of scoring. Scorers should first review pantry documents and signage when scoring this section. If additional clarity is needed discuss practices with pantry personnel.

7a. Partners with a variety of external groups, such as:

- [■] Healthcare or public health organizations
- [ ] Culture or population specific groups
- [■] Universities, colleges, or schools (includes Cooperative Extension and Outreach)
- [ ] Youth groups or 4-H clubs
- [ ] Community coalitions or networks

7b. Provides education, programs, or resources to clients directly or through partnerships:

- [ ] Nutrition or cooking
- [ ] Gardening
- [ ] Finances or financial empowerment
- [ ] Health related programs or screenings

7c. Provides information or referrals to local resources:

- [ ] Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application support
- [ ] Other food assistance programs (WIC, SFMNP, Meals on Wheels/senior meal sites, etc.)
- [ ] Medicaid and/or affordable healthcare
- [ ] Mental health services
- [ ] Employment
- [ ] Self or family-improvement (financial empowerment, parenting, etc.)
- [ ] Physical activity
- [ ] Services to meet needs of specific populations (childcare, disability support services, housing services, veterans, etc.)

7d. Provides or promotes services that address transportation and mobility barriers of clients:

- ☐ Mobile markets
- ☐ Home delivery
- ☐ Transportation vouchers or passes

_____ Write total number of boxes marked (20 points possible)

OVERALL NOTES:

NEFPAT Total Score

	# OF POINTS	POSSIBLE POINTS
TOTAL FOR OBJECTIVE 1		3
TOTAL FOR OBJECTIVE 2		24
TOTAL FOR OBJECTIVE 3	Type text here	6
TOTAL FOR OBJECTIVE 4		6
TOTAL FOR OBJECTIVE 5		12
TOTAL FOR OBJECTIVE 6		14
TOTAL FOR OBJECTIVE 7		20
TOTAL SCORE		85

Are you interested in help improving your overall score? YES / NO / UNSURE

What experience does your pantry have promoting nutrition and health? (mark all that apply)

- ☑ No prior experience or plans
- ☑ Planning and preparing
- ☑ Started implementing strategies or changes
- ☑ Continuing to implement additional strategies or changes
- ☑ Maintaining strategies or changes

Nutritious foods list (objective 2) sources

1. USDA's MyPlate (www.myplate.gov)
2. HER Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System (www.healthyeatingresearch.org)
3. The Healthy Choice by FoodLink (www.foodlinkny.org)
4. FDA's Food Labeling Guide (https: //www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/guidance-industry-food-labeling-guide)

Optional Information

The information in this section can be useful for creating a pantry action plan. This section is unscored and is not a required component of NEFPAT+. It can be sent to the pantry before/after assessing the scored section.

Sources of Food and Funding

Food	Funding	Estimated percent of overall inventory by type	
☐	☐	Federal commodities (e.g. TEFAP)	____ %
☐	☐	TANF	____ %
☐	☐	Food Bank	____ %
☐	☐	Food retailers (e.g. local grocery stores)	____ %
☐	☐	Private donors (e.g. local faith-based groups, non-food retailers, individuals, etc.)	____ %
☐	☐	Farmers or growers	____ %
☐	☐	Another food pantry	____ %
☐	☐	Business, organization, or growers who provide specific culturally familiar foods	____ %
☐	☐	Other (please specify)	____ %
			TOTAL: 100%

Facility Characteristics

1. Does the facility size, location, and layout meet the needs of guests?
2. Does the facility size, location, and layout meet the needs of volunteers? **YES / NO / UNSURE**
3. Does your pantry have enough cooler space? **YES / NO / UNSURE**
4. Does your pantry have enough freezer space? **YES / NO / UNSURE**
5. Does the facility allow your pantry to be set-up permanently? **YES / NO / UNSURE**
6. Does the pantry have enough volunteers? **YES / NO / UNSURE**
7. Does the pantry seek grants for facility, capacity, functional, or other needs? **YES / NO / UNSURE**

External Conditions

1. Have any external, uncontrollable factors (e.g. natural disasters, national/state policy changes, epidemics/pandemics, etc.) influenced or changed usual policies or practices in the last 12 months? Does not include items like internal staffing changes, reduction in volunteerism, etc. **YES / NO**

   If yes, please describe: _____

   _____

2. List changed policies or practices that you anticipate continuing.

   _____

   _____

   _____

Appendix B:
NEFPAT+ Technical Assistance Guide

EAT. MOVE. SAVE.

nefpat+

Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

UI Health
Office of Community Engagement and Neighborhood Health Partnerships

UIC

NEFPAT+

Technical Assistance & Resource Guide

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. This material is funded by the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP(and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences.

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NEFPAT+ Technical Assistance & Resource Guide

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OBJECTIVE 3

Increase Client Choice for Nutritious Foods 20

STRATEGY 3A

Uses client choice model—can include window, table, menu, online, or grocery store styles. 20

STRATEGY 3B

Offers items from each of the five MyPlate food groups: fruit, vegetable, grains, protein, and dairy. 25

STRATEGY 3C

Uses funds to buy Nutritious foods or encourages donations of Nutritious foods (e.g., distributes a list of suggested foods). 26

STRATEGY 3D

Seek fresh produce from local sources. 28

STRATEGY 3E

Clients can shop for food more than once a month. 30

OBJECTIVE 4

Market, Promote, and Nudge Nutritious Foods 33

STRATEGY 4A

Uses signage to encourage selection of Nutritious foods and healthy lifestyles.. 33

STRATEGY 4B

Nutritious foods are displayed before, in front of, or above other foods.. . . . 36

STRATEGY 4C

At least one Nutritious food is included in a bundle to display items together as a meal or recipe. Bundles can be bagged, highlighted in a featured display, or placed on nearby shelves. 36

STRATEGY 4D

Offers recipes to promote Nutritious foods to clients.. 38

STRATEGY 4E

Nutritious foods are easy to see and reach or are easy for clients to identify to volunteers. 39

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Has Guidelines for Food Safety, Nutrition, and Customer Service 41

STRATEGY 5A

Ensures safe food handling and food distribution with signage, written guidelines, policies, or other practices. 42

STRATEGY 5B

Has a written and implemented nutrition policy or guidelines. 44

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Has guidelines or practices that support customer service and inclusivity. . 47

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Has a system in place to identify the nutritional value of foods received. . . 50

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Offers food samples to promote nutritious foods to clients. 53

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Introduction

The Nutrition Environment Food Pantry Assessment Tool Plus (NEFPAT+) is a validated tool used to evaluate a pantry's environment, practices, and policies related to nutrition and health. The goal is to help food pantries identify ways to promote health and nutrition and inspire new ideas for improvement. ***The goal is not to achieve a perfect score.*** The tool can also be used to track a pantry's progress over time.

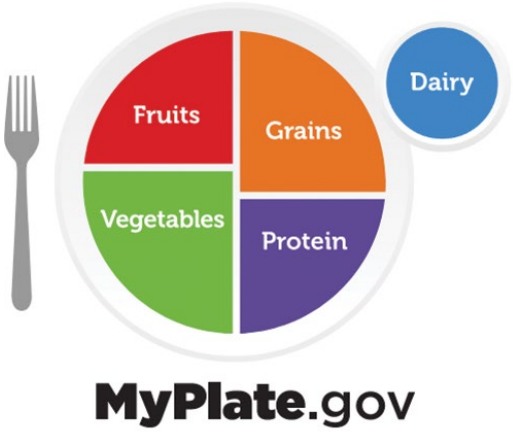
The NEFPAT+ Technical Assistance (TA) guide uses the word "clients" when referring to individuals who visit food pantries for food. Though many organizations are moving towards using more relational words, like guests or neighbors, "clients" is used here to maintain consistency and clarity with popular intervention terminology such as "client choice."[28] Technical assistance providers can use whichever term best meets the needs of their partners and community when working on strategies described in this guide.

Background

Individuals with very low food security are more likely to experience significant health issues and food pantry clients have higher rates of obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, and stroke than those who do not use food pantries.[2,17,45] Additionally, food insecure adults spend, on average, nearly 20% more on healthcare than their food secure peers.[30] These higher healthcare costs further strain household budgets and contribute to a cycle of poor nutrition further exacerbating chronic disease and healthcare expenditures. As a result, food pantries can play a significant role in improving health issues associated with food

insecurity by implementing policies and practices that promote health in their pantry .

NEFPAT+ uses the term **Nutritious** throughout the assessment to identify health-promoting foods. Appendix A includes the list of foods considered Nutritious and is referred to in Objectives 2, 3, 4, and 6. The **Nutritious** Foods List was developed from nationally recognized standards including the Healthy Eating Research (HER) Nutrition Guidelines, USDA's MyPlate, and FDA Food Labeling Standards.



The list is organized by MyPlate food groups so that NEFPAT+ can be completed as a self-assessment by pantry personnel, or by a technical assistance provider.[20,23,27] MyPlate is a simple nutrition guide to help Americans select foods and plan meals that support health, even on a budget. The five food groups are fruits, vegetables, proteins, grains, and dairy.[27] The MyPlate graphic is included any time MyPlate is referenced in an Objective.

For questions about NEFPAT+, the technical assistance guide, or to obtain permission to use an adapted version please contact University of Illinois SNAP-Education at **eatmovesave@illinois.edu**.

Pantry recognition in Alexander County, IL.

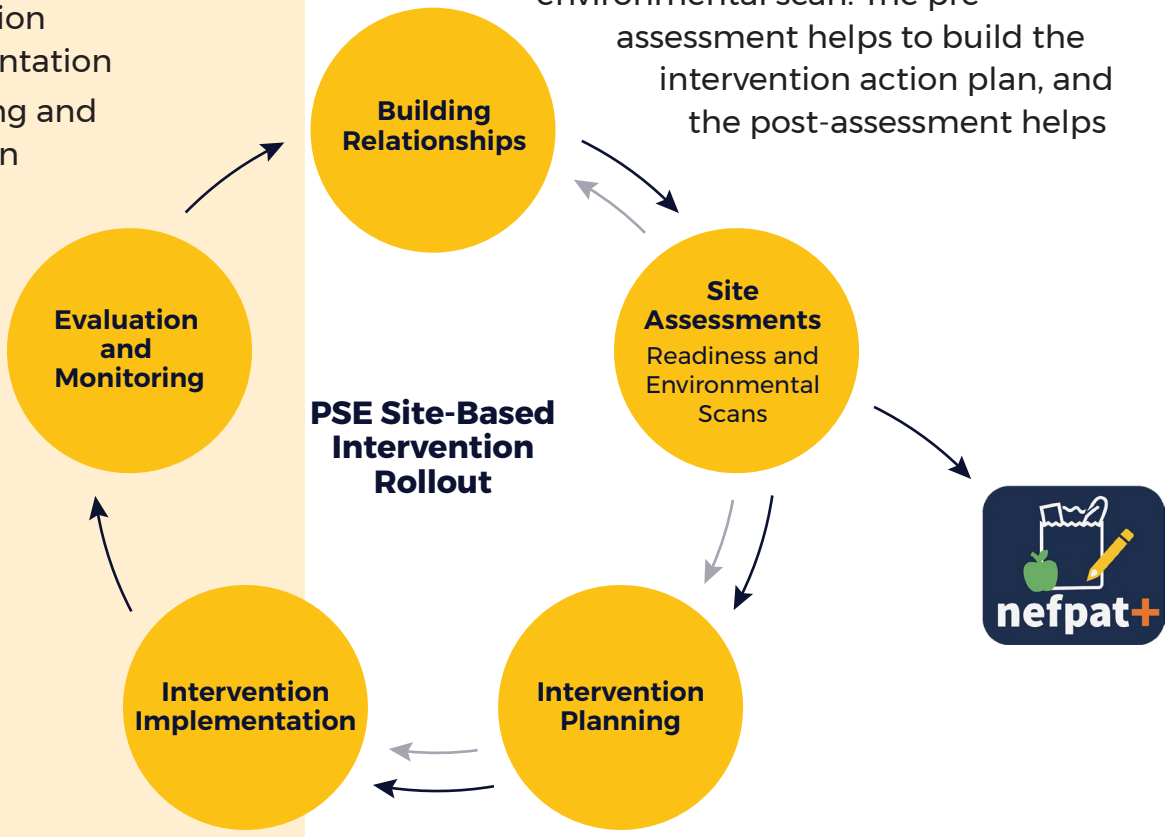
Conducting Food Pantry Interventions

Implementing food pantry interventions is a multistep process that includes:

- Building Relationships
- Site Assessments—Readiness and environmental scans (NEFPAT+)
- Intervention Planning
- Intervention Implementation
- Monitoring and Evaluation

Each stage of the intervention process is critical to achieving a healthier, more inclusive pantry environment. Food pantry managers should be engaged at every stage to ensure the intervention and strategies align with the food pantry's mission, values, goals, and capacity, and ultimately leadto changes the pantry can sustain on their own.

NEFPAT+ is used as the pre- and post-environmental scan. The pre-assessment helps to build the intervention action plan, and the post-assessment helps



to measure the pantry's progress over time.

While working through the intervention process, it is ok to return to a previous step if needed. For example, staff or volunteer turnover at the food pantry may impact the pantry's readiness or capacity for change, requiring an updated implementation plan. Field implementers can repeat the overall process as many times as needed until sustainability of the changes is achieved.

Get Started Materials

The Get Started Materials can be used to promote NEFPAT+ with partners, conduct the assessment, and communicate findings from the assessment to the pantry. To access these materials visit **go.illinois.edu/NEFPATPlusIntro**.

- NEFPAT+ Process and Strategies Flyer
- NEFPAT+ Assessment Checklist
- Sample NEFPAT+ Report
- Project Implementation Plan Template
- Sample Project Implementation Plan
- Pantry Readiness to Promote Health Tool

Building Relationships – Before the NEFPAT+

Before conducting NEFPAT+, it is essential to build a relationship with the food pantry partner and begin to assess their readiness for change. Readiness is defined in the SNAP-Ed Toolkit as "the state of being fully prepared to make a behavior change."[21] For organizations, this definition can be adjusted to reflect a state of being fully prepared to make an organizational change. Knowing where the partner is in their readiness to make changes will help technical assistance providers prioritize strategies.

Site Assessments – Readiness & Environmental Scan

Assess Readiness & Capacity

Assessment of personnel and organizational readiness can be done formally or informally, and attempt to determine the state of readiness of the individuals who operate the pantry, and of the organization overall. Information gathered in this stage helps to guide the action plan, strategy selection, and timing of the intervention. Readiness assessment can be done before, during or after conducting NEFPAT+ (i.e., the environmental scan) but should occur before implementation planning begins.

If formal readiness assessment is desired, consider using a tool like the Pantry Readiness to Promote Health Survey. Informal readiness assessment is often as effective, if not more, than formal tools. It occurs during relationship building, conversation, and observation of non-verbal cues. Look for the following:

- Attitudes, beliefs, willingness, and interest in making changes to address unmet needs.
- Needs, priorities, and goals of the individual or organization.
- Previous knowledge and skills.
- Existence of current action plans and/or expansion of existing programs.
- Strategies that may have the most potential for being adopted AND maintained over.
- Capacity and ability to successfully implement change.
- Likelihood that the partner can keep the change going over time.
- Resources that may be needed.

Learning about a partner's capacity to make changes helps to understand whether they will be able to make a change AND keep it going over time. Capacity indicators include:

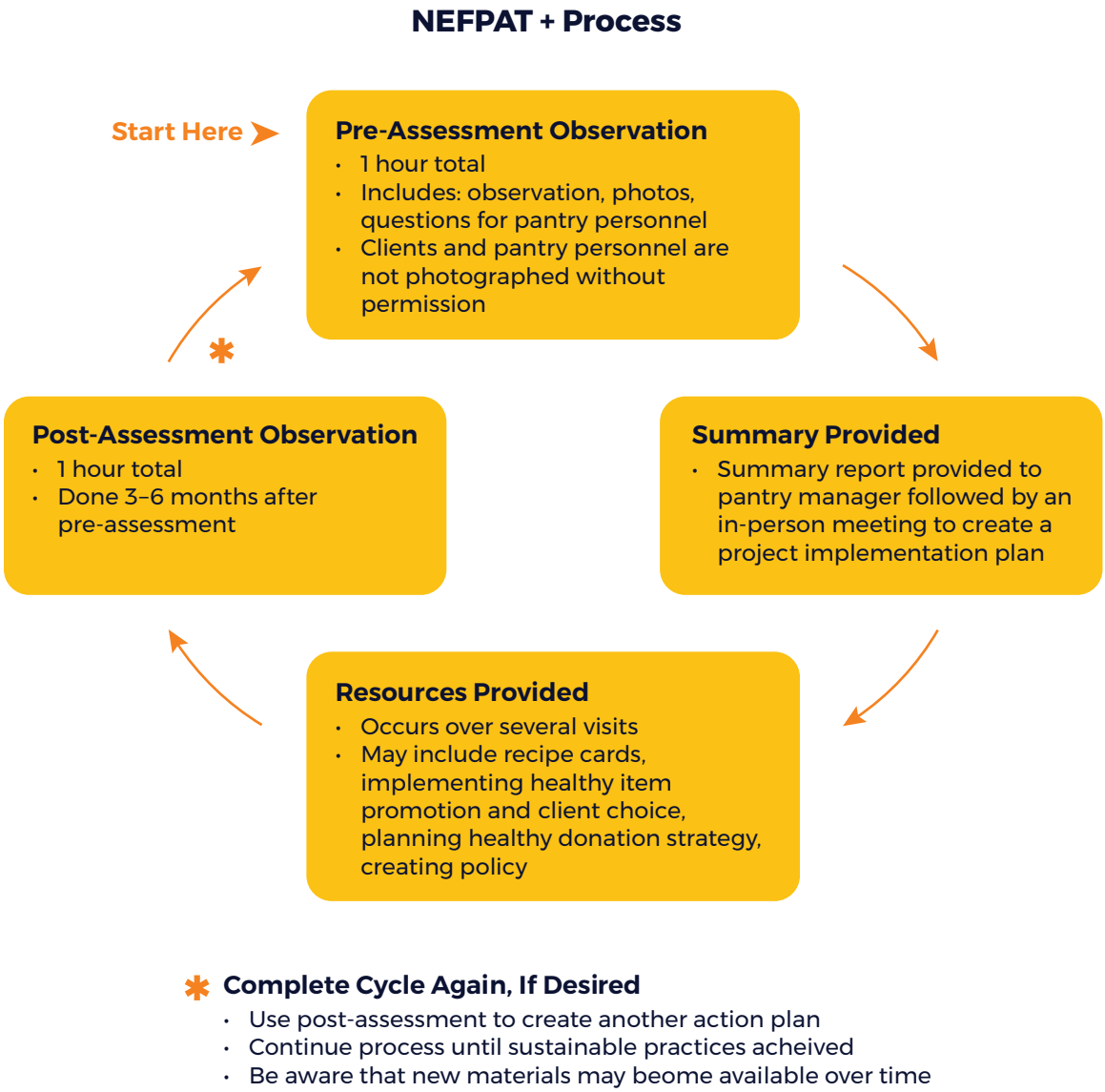
- Staffing or volunteers
- Funding
- Monitoring and Reporting systems
- Internal and External Stakeholder Support
- Knowledge and skills
- Internal Structures
- Policies and Procedures

Assess the environment, practices, and policies — conduct NEFPAT+

NEFPAT+ is a revised version of the original Nutrition Environment Food Pantry Assessment Tool (NEFPAT). NEFPAT+ incorporates promising practices from around the country, including strategies to create welcoming, inclusive spaces for clients.29 On-site observations are made just before (or during) food distributions. Scorers award points based on visual observation and information provided by staff, volunteers, and pantry documents. Interventions are intended to be low- or no-cost and cover the following areas:

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Offers a variety of fruits and vegetables.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Offers **Nutritious** Foods from each MyPlate food group.
- **OBJECTIVE 3:** Increase client choice for **Nutritious** foods.
- **OBJECTIVE 4:** Market, promote, and nudge **Nutritious** foods
- **OBJECTIVE 5:** Has guidelines for food safety, nutrition, and customer service.
- **OBJECTIVE 6:** Prioritizes health & inclusion in pantry operations.
- **OBJECTIVE 7:** Promotes partnerships & provides additional resources.

Intervention Planning – Create a Project Implementation Plan (PIP)



*** Complete Cycle Again, If Desired**

- Use post-assessment to create another action plan
- Continue process until sustainable practices acheived
- Be aware that new materials may beome available over time

A Project Implementation Plan (PIP) is a planning and implementation document used to guide Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) work. PIPs are developed using the results of readiness and environmental assessments and should be developed in collaboration with pantry leadership, input from pantry clients. PIPs generally include goals, priorities, strategies, activities, steps, and measures of progress, as well as responsibilities, task assignments, and the implementation timeline. They help to prioritize and tailor the work to the partner's readiness and identified needs, pantry clients, and community. When creating a PIP, include strategies aimed at increasing sustainability, capacity building, and plans for evaluating the intervention.

Identify and Prioritize the Needs of Clients

While developing the PIP, work with the pantry to answer the following questions. Consider characteristics of the community at large AND characteristics of the pantry's clients. Talk with pantry clients directly to learn about their needs, experiences, and priorities.

- What disparities exist for the community and pantry clients (consider disparities like health, housing, transportation, etc.)? How did they get that way?
- Think about the policy/program/practice and strategies already in use, or that the pantry is thinking about using. How might they be perceived by pantry clients? Why do you think they might be perceived this way? How do you know they might be perceived this way?
- Think about the policy/program/practice and strategies already in use, or that the pantry is thinking about using. How might clients be affected by the policy/program/practice or strategies? Why do you think they might be affected this way? How do you know they might be affected this way?
- Are pantry clients who are affected by the policy/program/practice or strategies involved in planning, decision-making, and/or implementation?
- What additional ways could they be involved, and their needs centered in the policy/program/practice or strategies?

- Do your answers above close the gaps in disparities in culturally appropriate, inclusive ways? If not, how should the policy/program/practice or strategies be revised? If yes, how can the policy/program/practice or strategies be documented to offer a model for others?

Include strategies to support sustainability

- Does the strategy include a plan for ongoing engagement with stakeholders to support the strategy over time?
- How can the strategy be maintained in the future?
- Consider how to expand interventions at the food pantry
- Identify funding sources for sustainability
- Identify a local person or entity to take ownership of maintaining the changes adopted at the food pantry

Intervention Implementation

To assist with planning and implementation of NEFPAT+ strategies, this technical assistance (TA) guide is organized by objective in the order in which they appear in the assessment. The guide is intended to be used based on the results of the NEFPAT+ pre-assessment. Users can skip to specific objectives or strategies identified in the project implementation plan. There is no need to work through the guide in a specific order.

Within each objective of this guide are listed "Action Steps," "Implementation Materials," and "Online Resources." "Action Steps" are recommendations for how a pantry or technical assistance provider can implement the content provided. "Implementation Materials" include flyers, posters, and other materials to assist in the implementation of an objective. Some materials have been created by University of Illinois (SNAP-Ed) and can be accessed through the provided link. The remaining materials are intended to help with implementing "Action Steps." Please contact **eatmovesave@illinois.edu** to revise any materials created by University of Illinois SNAP-Ed.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Following implementation, it is important to determine if the strategies implemented are having their intended impact on pantry clients. Individual Level Effectiveness Testing (ILET) is typically done soon-after implementation to determine whether strategies are working as intended. Before identifying what to assess, it's important to clearly understand the purpose of strategies implemented and how they were believed to lead to changes in people, partners, and communities (i.e., your **Theory of Change**). Knowing the strategy's purpose makes it easier to create the ILET plan and identify WHAT to measure.

For clients, consider...

- What changes were you trying to encourage them to make in the short term?
  - Ex., Increased awareness of the need for healthy eating? Increased motivation to select healthy items?
- What changes were you trying to encourage in the medium or long-term?
  - Ex., Did people actually choose healthier items compared to before the change?
- Did your strategies reach the audience you were trying to reach?
- What were their experiences?
- Were the initiatives culturally relevant?
- What suggestions do they have for improvement?
- How could the initiative be modified to have a greater impact on their lives?
- Did the changes implemented address a specific need?

For partners and communities, consider...

- What changes were you trying to encourage the organization, the people at the organization, or the community to make in the short-term? Medium-term? Long-term?
  - Ex., Increased community engagement?
- What were their experiences?
- Were the iniatives culturally relevant?
- What suggestions do they have for improvement?

- How could the initiative be modified for greater impact or to reach more people?

Next, determine the most appropriate method for collecting feedback to answer your questions. It's important to collect feedback directly from clients whenever possible and appropriate. Consider the needs and circumstances of individuals, organizations, and communities when deciding the best method to collect feedback. What other things might they be going through? What is the environment like? Have they been surveyed numerous times in the past?

Celebrate!

The post-assessment score can be compared to the pre-assessment score for measuring the pantry's progress over time. When pantries increase their score it's a great idea to celebrate progress made and recognize their efforts. If the pantry is interested, work with them to submit a success story to local media outlets to publicize and share their work. The pantry can also become a host site for other pantries to come and learn about the strategies they implemented.

Informal methods of collection, like having simple, casual conversations can often yield deeper, more meaningful information. Formal methods, like structured focus groups and surveys, can be useful too, depending on the circumstances.

Adjust and Improve the Action Plan

Review the feedback collected to determine the successful and non-successful parts of the intervention. Use this information to adjust the intervention and increase their effectiveness.

NEFPAT+ Post-Assessment

Time is needed for action planning and the implementation of changes between the Pre- and Post-Assessments. The appropriate timing for the post-assessment depends on the level and scope of changes, the time needed to implement the changes, and the pace at which the changes are incorporated into the pantry. It is recommended that post-assessments occur no sooner than 6-9 months after implementation begins. It would not be unreasonable for this time period to extend past 12 months given the depth of work and size of the organization.

OBJECTIVE 1

Offers a Variety of Fruits & Vegetables

Eating a variety of foods is an important part of a healthy diet. This is especially true for fruits and vegetables. When individuals eat fruits and vegetables of all colors, they are more likely to get the nutrients their bodies need to be healthy.[44] Pantry client surveys often find that fresh fruits and vegetables are highly desired items. Seeking client feedback on what variety of fruits and vegetables are preferred can help pantries prioritize that meets the health, preference, and cultural needs of clients.

In this toolkit, ***types*** of fruits and vegetables refers to distinct groups of produce, like apples, oranges, carrots, and potatoes. Fruit and vegetables ***forms*** refers to the same type of food presented in different ways. For example, granny smith apples, gala apples, canned apples, apple juice, and apple sauce all count as one fruit present in the food pantry. For Objective One, only foods that are safe for consumption can count towards a pantry's score, even if they do not meet the nutritional requirements described in Objective Two. Only foods that are safe for consumption count towards a pantry's score.

Refer to Appendix B. MyPlate Fruits & Vegetables List for a detailed list of different fruits and vegetables, including a variety of cultural produce items.

Implementation Materials

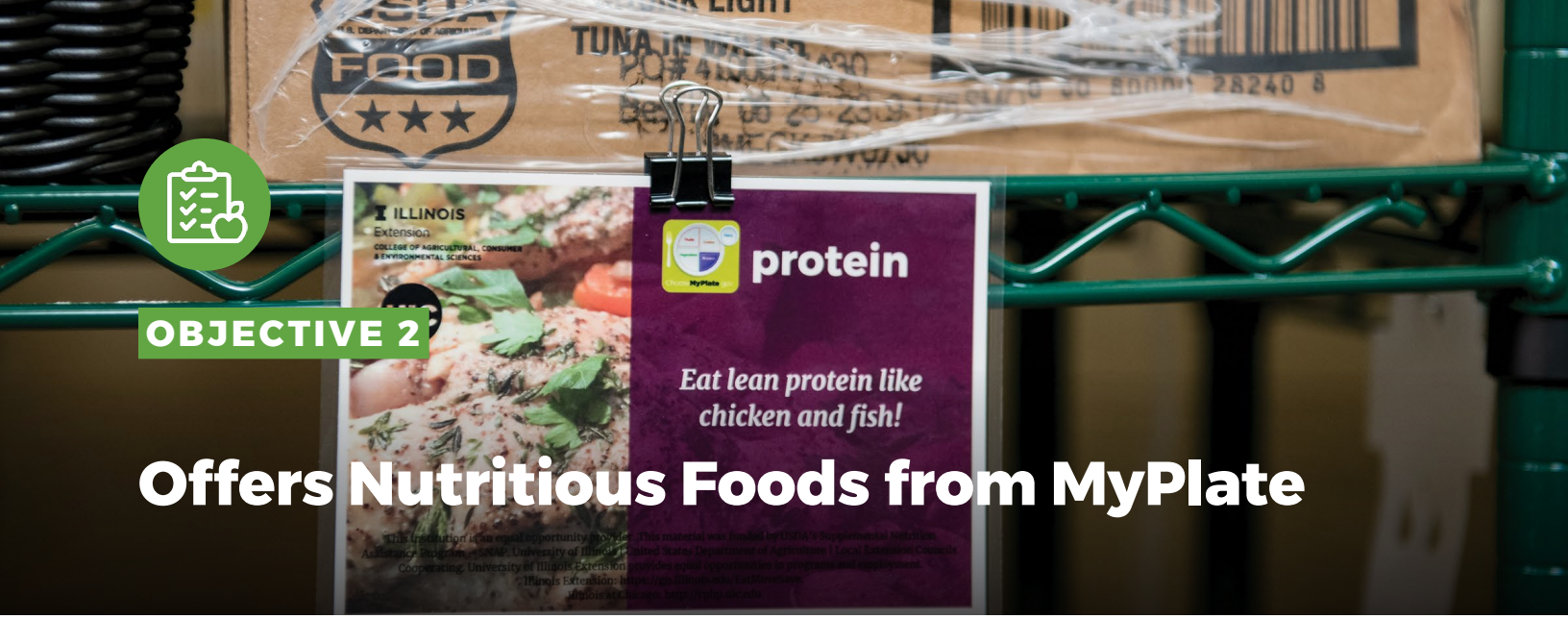
To access materials created by University of Illinois SNAP-Ed, visit **go.illinois.edu/NEFPATPlus1.** In this Box folder you will find the following materials:

- Fresh Food Drive flyer
- Healthy Donations flyer
- Nourish Your Neighbor Toolkit

Action Steps

- Help pantry assess which fruits and vegetables are desired by clients.
- Work with pantry to identify sources and funds for fruits and vegetables desired by clients.
- Aid pantry in hosting a **Nutritious** food drive.
- Connect pantry to local food procurement resources such as gardeners, farmers, or food retailers with excess produce to increase variety of offerings.
- Help pantry implement a garden.
- Help pantry assess which fruit and vegetables are desired by clients.
- Guide the placement of produce in the pantry to encourage guests to choose fruits and vegetables.
- Train pantry staff and volunteers on how to safely handle and store fresh produce.
- Train pantry staff and volunteers on the best practices for produce display and pantry layout.
- Provide shelf-talkers to highlight produce.
- Provide fruit and vegetable marketing materials.
- Assist in creating a healthy donation list.

Refer to Objective 4 for more information.

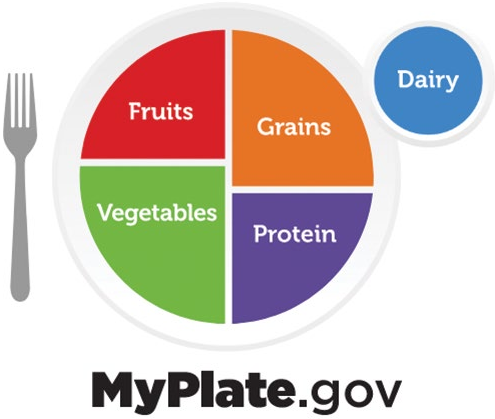


OBJECTIVE 2

Offers Nutritious Foods from MyPlate

According to the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, most Americans do not consume enough calcium, potassium, dietary fiber, and Vitamin D in their diets.[14] As referenced in the introduction, NEFPAT+ uses the term **Nutritious** to identify health-promoting foods. Objective Two includes a list of foods considered **Nutritious**. The list is informed by various sources found in **Appendix A**. Similar to MyPlate, a simple nutrition guide to help Americans select foods and plan meals that support health, even on a budget, the **Nutritious** foods list is a simple guide to help food pantry managers and TA providers identify health-promoting foods. The **Nutritious** foods list uses the five food groups: fruits, vegetables, proteins, grains, and dairy.[27]

For information on how to promote client selection of **Nutritious** foods, view **Objective 4**.



Garden Produce at Pantry

Action Steps

- Provide training on how to read nutrition food labels for pantry staff and volunteers.
- Encourage food donations that align with the **Nutritious** foods list.
- Assist in creating a list of suggested items tied to a nutrition policy.
- Provide recipes featuring fresh, canned, frozen, or dried fruits and vegetables and 100% juice that are commonly available at the pantry.
- Connect to local resources, like hospitals, restaurant supply stores, restaurants, and grocery stores that are going out of business, etc., that may donate refrigeration or freezer units.
- Work with local hunters and fishers on safely donating products.
- Help pantry identify which **Nutritious** foods are most desirable and familiar to clients.
- Assist the food pantry in organizing a fresh food drive.
- Work with pantry to identify new sources of donations and funding to acquire **Nutritious** foods.
- Assist in applying for grants to fund the purchase of **Nutritious** foods.
- Assist in applying for grants to acquire refrigeration and/or freezer units.
- Provides a variety of low-cost culturally familiar recipes that use encouraged food include items from the **Nutritious** foods list.
- Work with pantry to create a healthy donation list.
- Encourage food donations that include items on the align with **Nutritious** foods list.
- Work with local hunters and fishers on safely donating products.
- Work with pantry to identify sources and obtain funds for **Nutritious** foods.

Implementation Materials

- Signage to identify what is considered **Nutritious** foods
- Signage promoting healthy donations
- Visit **go.illinois.edu/NEFPATPlus2** to find the following materials:
  - Produce Freezer Tips and Storage
  - Canned Food Info and Shelf-Life Cards
  - Produce Storage Cards
  - Reading the Nutrition Facts Label

Technology Tips

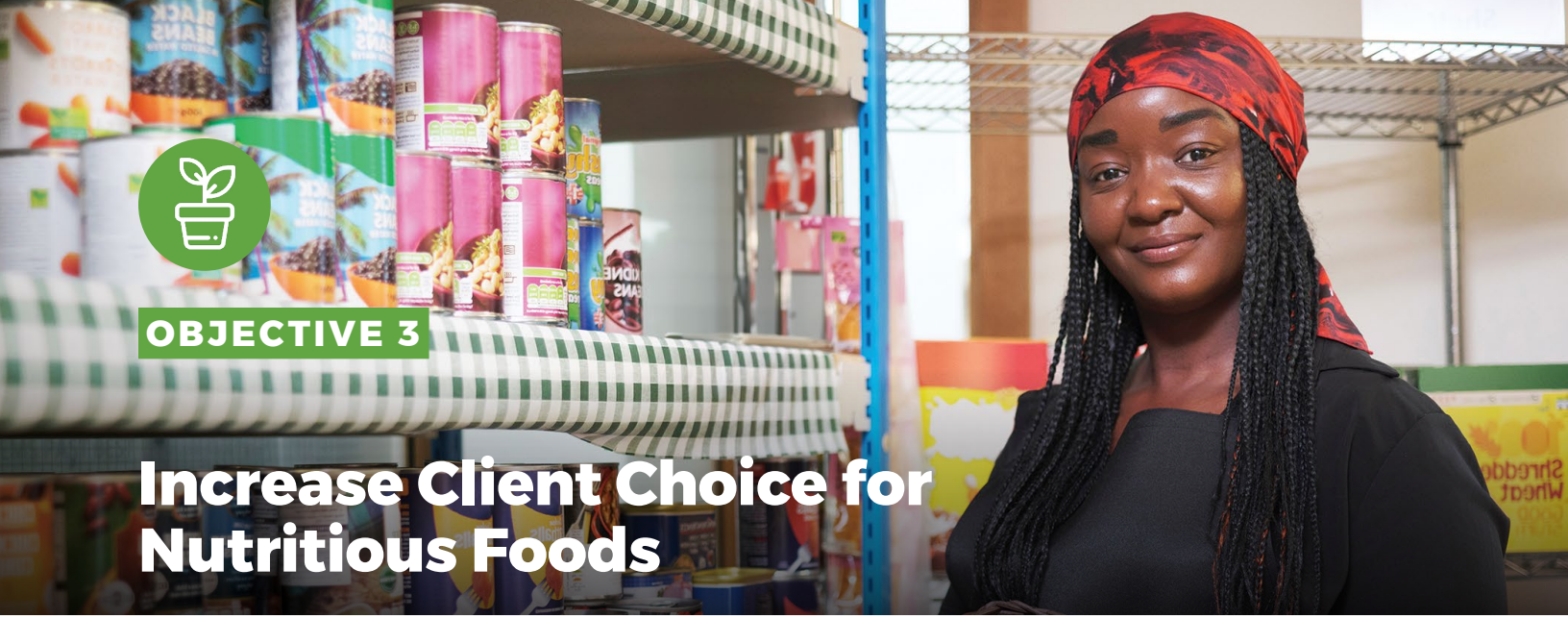
- Use social media to post **Nutritious** foods donation lists and examples of items needed by food pantry clients to reach a broader audience.
- Display videos featuring healthy recipes, especially those featuring common pantry items and lifestyle tips on TV in lobby or gathering area.

Fresh food drive

Bundle with recipe

Online Resources

- Healthy Eating Research (HER) Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System: **healthyeatingresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/her-food-bank_FINAL.pdf**
- Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The Nutrition Source: Added Sugars: **hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/carbohydrates/added-sugar-in-the-diet/**
- U.S. FDA, Guidance for Industry, Food Labeling Guide: **fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/guidance-industry-food-labeling-guide**
- USDA, MyPlate: **myplate.gov/**
- Feeding America | Healthy Food Drive Donation List: **hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/resource/feeding-americas-healthy-food-donation-list/**
- Hunger Task Force | Hunger Task Force MyPlate: **hungertaskforce.org/what-we-do/myplate/**
- National Food Retailer Grant Programs:
  - Aldi, Community: **corporate.aldi.us/en/corporate-responsibility/community/**
  - Dollar Tree, Giving Back to the Community: **dollartree.com/custserv/custserv.jsp?pageName=Corporate_Giving&parentName=About**
  - Walmart, Community Grant Program: **walmart.org/how-we-give**
  - Target | Community Impact: **corporate.target.com/corporate-responsibility/community-impact**



OBJECTIVE 3

Increase Client Choice for Nutritious Foods

Client choice is the preferred pantry model and allows clients to select their food instead of receiving a prepacked bag or box of groceries.[10,33,34] In this model, clients pick the foods they need to feed their families and manage health conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, or food allergies. Choices also allow pantry goers to select foods that are familiar for themselves and their family. Client choice helps pantries reduce food waste and, most importantly, preserves the dignity of clients by creating an environment of choice and trust.

Additional pantry benefits include:[5,9,25]

- Easy identification of client needs and preferences
- Reduces overhead and food waste
- Saves pantry dollars on ordering and storage space
- Increase opportunities to nudge clients to select healthy items
- Enrich volunteer experience via increased client interaction
- Builds trust and satisfaction with clients

STRATEGY 3A

Uses client choice model—can include window, table, menu, online, or grocery store styles.

Client Choice Models

Different models of client choice allow for flexibility in meeting pantry needs. The model a pantry chooses depends on the space, equipment, and volunteers available. **Mixing client choice models**

based on product quantity, space, and volunteers is encouraged! Implementing client choice does not have to be all or nothing. To ease into client choice, food pantries can continue to pre-box or bag most of their items and select one or two categories, for example, clients could choose from such as fresh produce and dairy. As a food pantry gets more comfortable with client choice, they can transition to offering choice in more categories. For more information on staff support the Client Choice Toolkit found under the **Implementation Materials** for this section.

Client Choice Models Include:

Window

In a window-style pantry, guests are outside the pantry area and scan see the food available. Guests tell volunteers what items they would like. This model works well in pantries with limited space or ones that serve a small number of guests.

Needs

- Space and shelving visible to guests
- Volunteers to box/bag items

Grocery

In a grocery store-style model, food is stocked on shelves and baskets like in a grocery store. Guests walk through the space to select their food. Volunteers can also guide guests through the pantry or check them out once they finish shopping.

Needs

- Shelving (stationary or wheeled)
- Time to stock shelves
- Refrigeration units (*if applicable)

A grocery style choice pantry in DuPage County

Table

In a table-style pantry, food is set on tables. Guests walk by tables to select food. Volunteers assist from behind tables or walk through with guests. This model works well for multi-purpose spaces, like church halls.

Needs

- Space to more around tables
- Set-up and take-down each pantry day

A table model, M.A.N.N.A. Food Pantry in Fairview Heights, IL

Menu

In a menu-style pantry, a list of available food is provided, and guests select what they want from the list. Volunteers assemble and pack the items selected. This model works well when space is limited.

Needs

- Appropriate reading level and variety of languages for guests
- Up-to-date menu of available foods
- Volunteers to box/bag items

A choice model using a menu in Whiteside County, IL

Online

In an online-style pantry, guests make selections through an online ordering system. Staff/Volunteers assemble the guests' pantry packages, which are then staged for pickup and/or delivery.

Needs

- Software/Online client ordering platform (examples: Google forms, Oasis Insight, SmartChoice, PantrySoft, PantryEasy)
- Online presence
- Photos of inventory, kits, bundles, etc.
- Volunteers to do outreach and support for those with barriers to get orders submitted

Action Steps

- Explore peer learning opportunities by connecting the pantry to nearby client choice pantries to see the different models in action.
- Offer grant writing assistance for items needed to implement client choice model (e.g., angled shelving, tables, etc.), when grants are available.
- Identify and connect pantry to local resources needed to implement a new client choice model.
- Assist with the design and implementation of a client choice or mixed model pantry.
- Assist in the arrangement and display of food items. For more information on the promotion of **Nutritious** foods, view the resources in **Objective 4**.
- Assist pantry in implementing menu style choice model.
- Assist pantry in implementing online style model.
- Provide pantries with an "Introduction to Client Choice" training.

Implementation Materials

To access materials created by University of Illinois Extension SNAP-Ed, visit **go.illinois.edu/NEFPATPlus3.** In this Box folder you will find the following materials:

- Client Choice Benefits
- Client Choice models
- Clients Choice FAQs
- Client Choice Toolkit

Online Resources

- Ohio Association of Second Harvest Food Banks "Making the Switch: A Guide for Converting to a Client Choice Food Pantry": **nanopdf.com/download/making-the-switch-print-rev-may-06indd_pdf**
  - Accompanying video: **youtube.com/watch?v=ztD_UobB0yE**
- Iowa University Extension Client Choice Video: **vimeo.com/740444577**
- Houston Food Bank Client Choice Handbook: **houstonfoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/PartnerServices_PartnerClientChoice-pdf.pdf**
- Feeding America "Morgan Stanley Foundation Child & Family Choice Initiative Year 1 Evaluation Brief, August 2022": **static1.squarespace.com/static/5626862ce4b0b39e06352d65/t/6373d78af4f9177c12d97d87/1668536203194/Morgan+Stanley+Grant_Year+One+Evaluation+Brief_FINAL.pdf**
- Ratcliffe Elementary School Food Market Video (example of client choice at a school food pantry): **youtube.com/watch?v=gACAQkJ9HTI**
- How Pantries are Overcoming Obstacles to Client Choice: **foodbanknews.org/how-pantries-are-overcoming-obstacles-to-client-choice/**
- Do People Want to Come Back Inside? Research findings and myths around offering choice (June 2023 webinar): **vimeo.com/840563746**

STRATEGY 3B

Offers items from each of the five MyPlate food groups: fruit, vegetable, grains, protein, and dairy.

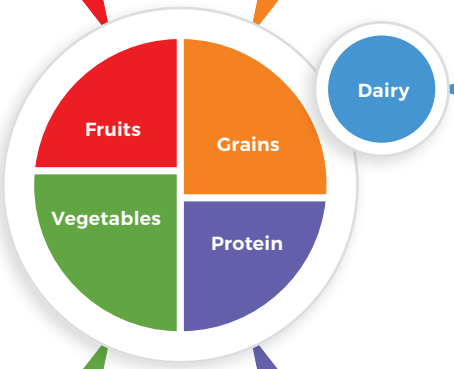
A nutrient rich diet includes foods from all five food groups: fruits, vegetables, proteins, dairy products, and grains. It is important to allow food pantry clients the opportunity to choose the **Nutritious** foods from these food groups that their family needs. Pantries with refrigeration and freezers can offer these items fresh, refrigerated, and/or frozen. Pantries without refrigeration capacity can still offer foods from each food group in forms like canned, dried, or pre-packaged foods.[27]

MyPlate Nutritious Food Donation List

Fruits
- Canned fruits (peaches, pears, pineapple, etc.)
- Fruit purees (applesauce, fruit puree pouches)
- Dried fruit (raisins, dried cherries, dried bananas, etc.)
- 100% fruit juice

Grains

Shelf-stable grains:
- Oatmeal (instant, steel-cut, rolled, quick)
- Rice
- Cereal
- Pasta
- Crackers
- Popcorn



Dairy
- Shelf-stable 1 % or skim milk (powdered, ultrahigh temperature)
- Shelf-stable almond, soy, or rice milk

Vegetables
- Canned vegetables (green beans, tomatoes, carrots, etc)
- Dried or dehydrated vegetables (potatoes, peas)
- 100% Vegetable juice (examples: carrot, tomato)

Protein
- Canned fish (tuna, salmon, sardines)
- Canned meat (chicken, beef, turkey, pork)
- Canned or dried beans (chickpeas, kidney beans, black beans, lentils)
- Nuts (peanuts, walnuts, cashews, almonds)
- Nut butter (peanut butter, almond butter)

Source: USDA MyPlate[27]

Action Steps

Strategize ways to consistently provide all five food groups year-round, including:

- Connect to new local resources for donations, including local grocery stores, farms, or feeding sites.
- Assist in creating a list of suggested items tied to a nutrition policy.
- Look for new products to offer.
- Offer grant writing assistance for refrigeration, freezer, or storage needs, if grants are available.
- Create a Year-round garden

STRATEGY 3C

Uses funds to buy Nutritious foods or encourages donations of Nutritious foods (e.g., distributes a list of suggested foods).

Pantries can request **Nutritious** food items by hosting healthy or fresh food drives or prioritizing purchase of **Nutritious** items. Pantries can also create and use social media pages to educate donors, community members, and clients on the importance of healthy pantry initiatives and **Nutritious** food options.

Fresh Food Drive at Tazewell County Health Department

Implementation Materials

To access materials created by University of Illinois Extension SNAP-Ed, visit **go.illinois.edu/NEFPATPlus3.** In this Box folder you will find the following materials:

- Sample Healthy Donation List
- Sample Fresh Food Drive Flyer
- Themed Food Drive Donation lists
- Nourish Your Neighbor Toolkit

Action Steps

- Assist in creating a list of suggested items tied to a nutrition policy.
- Tailor a list to fit seasonal produce and client preference.
- Develop themed food drives (e.g., produce, breakfast, protein, healthy holiday, etc.).
- Create a registry or public wish list for your food pantry at big box stores or other popular online retailers. Here you could list non-perishable items that are popular among pantry clients, as well as items such as containers a food pantry needs to organize food.

Technology Tips

- Post a healthy donation list and examples of food items needed on social media sites.
- Share successful healthy donation drives on social media and pantry website.
- Host a virtual donation drive (Example: **sandiegofoodbank.org/virtual/**)

Online Resources

- Feeding America | Healthy Food Drive Donation List: **hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/resource/feeding-americas-healthy-food-donation-list/**
- Hunger Task Force | Hunger Task Force MyPlate: **hungertaskforce.org/what-we-do/myplate/**
- HER Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System: **healthyeatingresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/her-food-bank_FINAL.pdf**

STRATEGY 3D

Seek fresh produce from local sources.

Increasing fresh produce offerings can be as simple as reaching out to local gardeners and farmers who are willing to donate. Potential produce donors include:

- Community gardens
- Local Farmers and Farmers markets
- Restaurants
- Supermarkets
- Local schools (unopened cafeteria leftovers, including fresh fruits and vegetables, are otherwise thrown away
- Colleges and universities

Implementation Materials

- Community Gardens Flyer: **go.illinois.edu/NEFPATPlus3**
- See additional Community Garden resources in **Section 7c**.

Gleaning produce from local sources not only benefits the pantry by providing fresh, and often free, **Nutritious** food options but also strengthens and expands community relationships and pantry support systems.

Pantries can also connect with websites and organizations dedicated to connecting produce with non-profits, like AmpleHarvest. This site links farmers with food pantries to minimize food waste and supply fresh, seasonal produce. Any non-profit food pantry can register at: **ampleharvest.org.**

Pantries can also grow their own food by implementing an on-site or off-site community garden. Local resources include Extension Master Gardeners, school Ag programs.

Garden signage at OSF St. Ann's Community Garden in Peoria, IL

Action Steps

- Connect food pantry with local resources, such as farms or other gleaning organizations.
- Assist pantry with registration on AmpleHarvest: **ampleharvest.org/**
- Assist pantry with registration on ChowMatch: **chowmatch.org/**
- Assist pantry with registration on Waste No Food: **wastenofood.org/**
- Suggest setting up a table or designated location where local donors can drop off produce.
- Share donation requests for local farmers/growers on social media, websites, newsletters, or local publications with time/date/location specifics.
- Connect food pantry with local Extension Master Gardeners or gardening clubs.
- Create a local food pantry network for food pantries to share resources, including food and volunteers, to support additional distribution days at each food pantry and prevent food waste.

Online Resources

- USDA Let's Glean United We Serve Toolkit: **usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda_gleaning_toolkit.pdf**
- AmpleHarvest: **ampleharvest.org/register-a-pantry/**
- Iowa State Extension Implementing Gardening and Increasing Fresh Produce at Food Pantries: **vimeo.com/716492294**
- The Minnesota Garden Gleaning Toolkit: **mnproject.org/food-GardenGleaningForm.html**
- Center for Agriculture and Food Solutions National Gleaning Map: **nationalgleaningproject.org/gleaning-map/**

Locally Grown Produce

STRATEGY 3E

Clients can shop for food more than once a month.

Offering food distributions more than once a month can significantly help individuals and families in need. While food pantries are often considered "emergency food" sources, some families in extended times of hardship rely on pantries more regularly during crisis. As such, "emergency" allocations of three day food supplies can be insufficient. However, despite common pantry limitations of volunteer time and food supply, or current policies, there are creative ways to offer more distribution days or times.

It is also important to consider pantry hours, offering open times after normal work hours, on weekends, or taking shift schedules into consideration. Some pantries work to balance their food inventory by restricting the distribution of higher demand items to once a month and distributing perishables, produce and abundant items more frequently. Additionally, pantries can install a micro-pantry or "blessing box" to provide a 24/7 emergency supply of shelf-stable items in between visits.

Example 1: For pantries open multiple times each month, guests come once in the month for full-service offerings. Guests can come again later in the month but may only select perishable items (produce, bread, etc.)

Example 2: For pantries that operate only once a month, consider adding reduced service days where only perishable items are available such as a "produce and bread market."

Example 3: Pantries can consider adding a small, self-serve micro-pantry filled with non-perishables that clients can utilize during times when the pantry is closed or if they have already visited that month. A pantry could also partner with a community organization or group to help keep the pantry stocked.

Self-serve micro-pantry including outdoor fridge in Pope County

Action Steps

- Help pantry identify items to distribute more frequently.
- Connect pantry with local resources like food banks, grocery stores with community outreach programs, or food rescue programs.
- Work with pantry to create a list of potential new donors.
- Assist in creating a list of suggested items identified by nutrition policy.
- Create a marketing strategy for a healthy donation program. (**See section 3c**)
- Help pantry start or update a social media page and develop a social media strategy.
- Connect pantry with local builder group to build micro-pantry or blessing box.
- Create opportunities for peer learning by connecting pantry with other food pantries to provide local examples of allowing pantry clients to shop more than once a month.
- Create a local food pantry network for food pantries to share resources, including food and volunteers, to support additional distribution days at each food pantry and prevent food waste.
- Work with the pantry to recruit additional volunteers to support more distribution days.

Technology Tips

- Sign pantry up for local online food rescue programs to help increase inventory:
  - Waste No Food: **wastenofood.org**
  - Feeding America MealConnect: **mealconnect.org**
  - Assist pantry with registration on ChowMatch: **chowmatch.org**
  - Look for local options in your community.
- Post photos of full or empty shelves on social media to encourage donors to contribute.

Online Resources

Local food retailers and other businesses occasionally offer financial support opportunities.

Examples of national chain opportunities include:

- Aldi, Community: **corporate.aldi.us/corporate-sustainability/community/aldi-community-gift-card-program**
- Dollar Tree, Giving Back to the Community: **corporate.dollartree.com/values/corporate-giving**
- Sam's Club, Community Grant Program: **walmart.org/what-we-do/strengthening-community/local-community-support**
- Target, Community Impact: **corporate.target.com/corporate-responsibility/community-impact**
- Walmart, Community Grant Program: **walmart.org/what-we-do/strengthening-community/local-community-support**

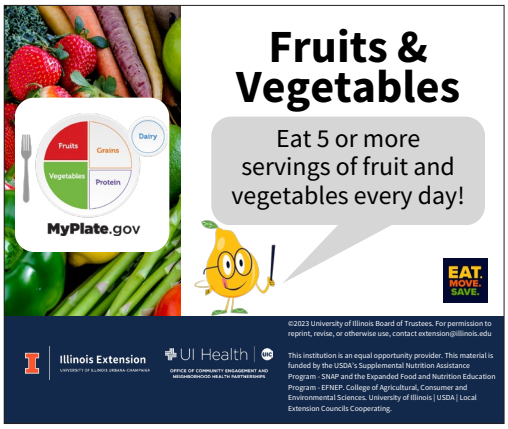
Additional local funding opportunities could include:

- United Way
- Community Benefit Programs
- Managed Care Organizations
- Utility Companies
- Rotary Clubs or other Civic organizations
- Local community foundations
- Health Department foundations
- Local healthcare entities

OBJECTIVE 4

Market, Promote, and Nudge Nutritious Foods[18, 42]

Promotion and placement of **Nutritious** foods can influence what individuals choose. Consider how food is displayed at a grocery store. For example, fruits and vegetables are displayed in attractive containers or featured items are displayed on end caps. The same types of promotion can be done at food pantries.[42] Objective 4 applies marketing strategies used by grocery stores to increase sales to promote healthy food choices among clients in the food pantry setting.



Shelf talker

The strategies below are all part of a pantry's "nudge" strategy. Nudges are specific environmental techniques that encourage clients to choose healthier foods through subtle display changes and marketing.[18,42] The nutritional nudges discussed below help to create an overall, pleasant pantry environment.

STRATEGY 4A

Uses signage to encourage selection of Nutritious foods and healthy lifestyles.

Pantries can utilize signage in subtle, inexpensive ways to encourage clients to choose **Nutritious** foods.

Point-of-decision signage to encourage the selection of specific items (small signs, stickers, symbols identifying Nutritious items on shopping lists, shelf talkers, etc.).

Point-of-decision prompts encourage clients to select certain items by drawing attention to where they are placed. Place shelf talkers or shelf tags next to Nutritious. Highlight positive attributes about the product, such as nutrition information or simple ideas on how to use it.[32]

Fruit nudge in Pekin, IL

Signage promoting general healthy eating (MyPlate materials, posters, window stickers, a-frames, yard signs, shelf talkers with general messages, etc.).

MyPlate is a healthy eating style created by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to encourage consumption of foods from all five food groups (fruits, vegetables, proteins, dairy products, and grains).[27] Providing visible information about a healthy, balanced diet encourages clients to make healthy choices.

Some pantries have tables or waiting areas for clients to sit and wait before they shop. Consider areas like these to display table talkers, flyers, or posters with nutrition education, in addition to recipes that include **Nutritious** items distributed in the pantry.

Pantries that have outdoor distribution can promote the importance of eating nutritiously, too by displaying window stickers, a-frames signage, and yard signs that include **Nutritious** messaging. Outdoor signage also provides an opportunity to advertise your pantry to people in the community.

A point of decision sticker in Whiteside County, IL

Poster encouraging the selection of fruits and vegetables at St. Paul Episcopal Church in Peoria, IL

Outdoor signage in Perry County, IL

MyPlate poster encouraging the selection of nutritious food during a food distribution in Peoria, IL

Shelf talkers displayed next to nutritious item in DuPage County, IL

Action Steps

- Help pantry identify items to distribute.
- Work with pantry to implement nutrition nudges for available items.
- Provide posters or shelf talkers that promote **Nutritious** foods.
- Train staff and volunteers on nudges.
- Offer training on MyPlate or other healthy eating topics to pantry staff and volunteers.
- Assist pantry in applying for funding for digital displays.

Implementation Materials

- Shelf talkers: **go.illinois.edu/NEFPATPlus4**
- Welcoming posters

Online Resources

- Healthy Eating Research- Supporting Wellness at Pantries: **healthyeatingresearch.org/research/supporting-wellness-at-pantries-swap-toolkit-2021/**
- USDA MyPlate: **myplate.gov**

Technology Tips

- If a pantry has access to a TV or computer, show food prep videos or nutrition information in waiting areas. Find videos at University of Illinois SNAP-Ed's **Eat.Move.Save** or Iowa State Extension's **Spend Smart.Eat Smart**

STRATEGY 4B

Nutritious foods are displayed before, in front of, or above other foods.

Displaying **Nutritious** items close to the entrance encourages clients to select them first. Similarly, stocking more **Nutritious** items at eye level or in attractive displays can encourage selection, too. Make sure to take different client heights into consideration when determining "eye level."[41]

STRATEGY 4C

At least one Nutritious food is included in a bundle to display items together as a meal or recipe. Bundles can be bagged, highlighted in a featured display, or placed on nearby shelves.

Bundling involves displaying or packaging **Nutritious** items with other foods to show how they can be combined to make a healthy meal or snack.[38] Bundling is done by packaging items together on neighboring shelves or in a display as a complete recipe.[38] Include the recipe nearby.

Action Steps

- Assist the pantry in adjusting their layout to promote **Nutritious** foods.
- Guide the placement of fruits and vegetables in the pantry.
- Provide training to pantry volunteers and staff about how to use food placement to encourage selection.

Bundling display at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Peoria, IL

Bundling Table Example

Bundle bag at Loaves and Fish Food Pantry in Peoria, IL

Food bundling box in Peoria, IL

Recipe of the month box at Redeemer Food Pantry in Peoria, IL

Action Steps

- Ask clients how they prepare certain foods and if they would be willing to share recipes.
- Provide recipes and common food bundling ideas featuring **Nutritious** food items.
- Provide staff and volunteers training on best practices for bundling foods.
- Assist the pantry in identifying monthly themes for displays.

Implementation Materials

To access materials created by University of Illinois Extension SNAP-Ed, visit **go.illinois.edu/NEFPATPlus4**. In this Box folder you will find the following materials:

- How to Bundle Action Plan
- Bundling Flip Cards
- Bundling Food Poster

STRATEGY 4D

Offers recipes to promote Nutritious foods to clients.

Recipes are a great way to introduce clients to new foods and preparation techniques. They also encourage clients to select foods that are less familiar.

Recipes should:

- Include at least one **Nutritious** food.
- Have ingredients that are available in the pantry.
- Have few ingredients.
- Have ingredients that are low-cost.
- Have minimal prep and cooking time.
- Utilize simple kitchen tools.
- Be easy to understand.
- Be written at an appropriate reading level for most pantry clients.
- Meet the cultural needs and preferences of pantry clients.

A recipe promoting nutritious food in DeKalb County, IL

Action Steps

- Assist the pantry in identifying recipes based on the recommendations above.
- Identify a system for the pantry to distribute recipes to clients.
- Connect with pantry clients to identify recipes that match the client's food preferences.
- Offer samples of a promoted recipe during distribution.
- Assist the pantry in applying for funding for digital displays.

Technology Tips

- Post a "recipe of the day" on your social media page using items from the pantry.
- If a TV or digital display is available, show recipe videos in waiting areas.

Online Resources

- EAT.MOVE.SAVE: **eat-move-save.extension.illinois.edu/save**
- USDA Recipe Collection: **nutrition.gov/topics/shopping-cooking-and-meal-planning/recipe-collection**
- MyPlate Recipes: **myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen/recipes**

STRATEGY 4E

Nutritious foods are easy to see and reach or are easy for clients to identify to volunteers.

Clients are more likely to take items that are easy to physically see and reach.[42] Place **Nutritious** items in easily visible and reachable places that are eye level, on tables or in open boxes. When possible, avoid very low shelves or high-to-reach places. Work with the food pantry to understand the best height to place their inventory to best meet the needs of their clients. Consider pantry clients who may use a wheelchair, scooter or cane when designing the set-up

Volunteers wearing matching shirts while stocking shelves, First Baptist Church Food Pantry, Canton, IL

of the pantry. Consider using angled shelves to make items even easier to see and reach.

Having volunteers wear name tags, bright colored shirts, etc., so clients can easily identify them for help reaching foods, carrying items, and other another form of assistance.

For menu or online style food pantries, use large print to list items and include pictures with each item to help those with poor vision or lower literacy levels.

To help with accessibility, consider having:

- Volunteers to assist pantry clients in reading and describing a menu.
- A support line for people to call when online ordering assistance is needed.

Remember that not all disabilities are visible. If a person requests extra help it is important to trust that they need it, rather than making assumptions about their condition. For example, someone with a degenerative condition, such as multiple sclerosis (MS), might not appear have a disability but may still need extra help while shopping.

To learn more about serving clients with service dogs, refer to **Objective 7c**.

Action Steps

- Assist the pantry in applying for funding to purchase shelving.
- Consider shelving on wheels to rearrange the pantry when needed and ensure accessibility.
- Develop a pantry layout that ensures wide space for wheelchair users.
- Train pantry staff and volunteers on the best practices for displaying **Nutritious** foods.
- Train staff to work with pantry clients that have disabilities.

Online Resources

- Americans with Disabilities Act: **ada.gov/**
- What is the ADA? Basics and Definitions of the Americans with Disabilities Act **youtube.com/watch?v=zKyjshcxbI0**

OBJECTIVE 5

Has Guidelines for Food Safety, Nutrition, and Customer Service

Policies are written guidelines to communicate a food pantry's priorities and practices in providing a welcoming environment. Formalized guidelines help pantries navigate changes in staffing and volunteers by clearly outlining what is important to the pantry, and how it operates to achieve its goals. A food pantry might start off with more flexible guidelines and gradually add more concrete guidance in phases. Policies should be reviewed and updated on a regular schedule.

Key components of policies and guidelines include:

- Purpose of the policy.
- Goals and standards to achieve or maintain.
- Procedures the organization, including staff and volunteers, will follow to achieve or maintain the goals outlined.
- Resources available to support goals and standards.
- How the pantry will evaluate progress on its goals and monitor, including the frequency of monitoring and evaluation activities.
- Enforcement of the procedures used to support the goals and standards of food pantry. This section includes what steps an organization will take to ensure procedures are being followed by volunteers and staff and any consequences for not following the procedures.

STRATEGY 5A

Ensures safe food handling and food distribution with signage, written guidelines, policies, or other practices.

Food safety is an important part of safe pantry operations. Some people are at higher risk of foodborne illnesses including infants, children, pregnant women, the elderly, and individuals with weakened immune systems.[31] Having a food safety policy helps to protect individuals in these groups by guiding pantry staff and volunteers on safe food handling practices.

It is important for food staff and volunteers to be aware of, and trained on the policy, to ensure food is consistently handled safely throughout the organization.

When creating or revising a food safety policy or set of guidelines consider including these topics: volunteer policy, transporting donated foods, handwashing hygiene, accepting donated food, facility cleanliness, and food storage and distribution.

Food Safety Policy Poster

Action Steps

- Reach out to the food bank(s) a pantry receives food from to learn about their food safety requirements for partnering agencies. Not all food pantries receive food from food banks.
- Assist with the creation or revision of a food safety policy.
- Provide food safety reference cards and signage.
- Provide volunteer training on food safety policy and practices.
- Provide or connect pantry with basic food safety training.
- Assist with development of communication strategies to communicate with stakeholders about the food safety policy.

Implementation Materials

To access materials created by University of Illinois Extension SNAP-Ed, visit **go.illinois.edu/NEFPATPlus5**. In this Box folder you will find the following materials:

- Hand Washing Poster
- Food safety policy flyer
- Food safety sample policy
- Signage- handwashing, meat handling tips, produce tips, refrigeration storage, temperature chart and log.
- Food safety training for staff.

Hand Washing Poster

Technology Tips

- Use smartphone apps to help pantry volunteers and guests determine the shelf-life of produce and other pantry items! Try USDA's FoodKeeper App: **foodsafety.gov/keep/foodkeeperapp**
- Post about proper food storage and preparation of fresh produce on your social media pages. Link to sources like University of Illinois Extension's Eat. Move. Save. Website: **eat-move-save.extension.illinois.edu/eat**
- Set up a "tech station" where guests can view short food prep videos on a TV or tablet. Feature videos of fresh produce available in the pantry that day. Use video clips from reputable sources like Iowa State University's Spend Smart. Eat Smart. Website: **spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/videos**

Online Resources

- United States Department of Agriculture, Shelf-Stable Food Safety: **fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/shelf-stable-food**
- United States Department of Agriculture | Food Product Dating: **fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/food-product-dating**
- Pittsburgh Food Bank | Shelf Life of Food Bank Products: **afoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Food-Bank-of-Abemarle-Food-Safety-Guide.pdf**
- United States Department of Agriculture, Food Safety Tips: **snaped.fns.usda.gov/recipes/food-safety-tips**
- University of Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Food Pantry Project: **fyi.uwex.edu/safehealthypantries/**
- Indiana's Emergency Food Resource Network | Food Safety: **purdue.edu/indianasefrnetwork/Home/MediaCategory/fs**

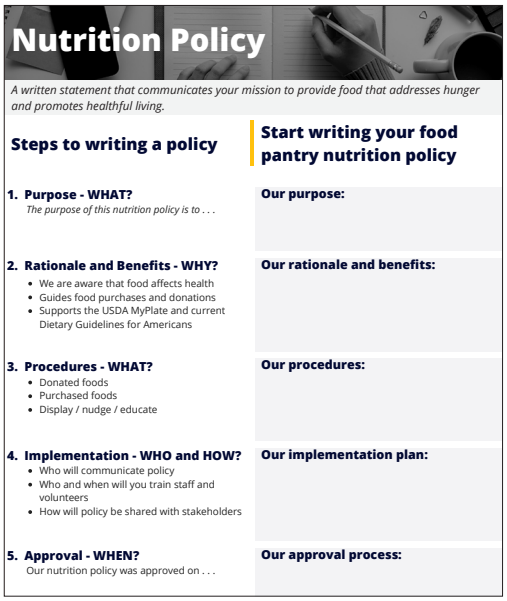
STRATEGY 5B

Has a written and implemented nutrition policy or guidelines.

For those struggling to afford groceries, inexpensive and processed foods are often the most readily available options. These foods often have added sugar and salt, making healthy eating difficult for those with diet-related chronic diseases, including diabetes and heart disease. Pantries who adopt a nutrition policy demonstrate their commitment to the health of clients and the community by prioritizing the distribution of **Nutritious** foods. A nutrition policy helps to ensure a consistent supply of healthy foods year-round. When drafting a new policy, it is important to understand a pantry's current practices to create a policy that isn't too difficult to implement.

Additional benefits of written nutrition policies or guidelines include:

- Encouraging **Nutritious** donations from donors.
- Providing clear communication with partners and food suppliers.
- Serving as a guide to staff and volunteers who purchase, accept and display foods.
- Communicating priorities of the pantry to sustain healthy practices over time.



Nutrition Policy

A written statement that communicates your mission to provide food that addresses hunger and promotes healthful living.

Steps to writing a policy	Start writing your food pantry nutrition policy
1. Purpose - WHAT? *The purpose of this nutrition policy is to . . .*	**Our purpose:**
2. Rationale and Benefits - WHY? • We are aware that food affects health • Guides food purchases and donations • Supports the USDA MyPlate and current Dietary Guidelines for Americans	**Our rationale and benefits:**
3. Procedures - WHAT? • Donated foods • Purchased foods • Display / nudge / educate	**Our procedures:**
4. Implementation - WHO and HOW? • Who will communicate policy • Who and when will you train staff and volunteers • How will policy be shared with stakeholders	**Our implementation plan:**
5. Approval - WHEN? Our nutrition policy was approved on . . .	**Our approval process:**

Nutrition Policy Worksheet

Items to consider including in your policy:

- Statement of purpose. This is the "what" of your nutrition policy. It states why the policy is important for your food pantry.
  - *Example*: The purpose of this nutrition policy is to guide our food pantry's decisions on the types of food we acquire and distribute so we can support the health of our clients, eliminate hunger, and improve nutrition security in our community.
- Priority foods to purchase and distribute.
  - *Example*: foods identified from conversations with pantry guests.
- Foods reduced in distribution.
  - *Example*: refined grains, solid fats, trans fats, added sugars, and high sodium foods.
- Foods to reduce purchasing.
  - *Example*: candy, sugar-sweetened beverages, energy drinks .
- Foods in the pantry not covered by the policy.
  - *Example*: donated foods from a community canned food drive.
- Language encouraging **Nutritious** donations.
  - *Example*: include **Nutritious** foods donation list in policy.
- Guidelines on product placement.
  - *Example*: Prioritize placement of healthy food items close to the entrance and on shelves/tables where it is most visible.

- Distribution practices ("nudges") to encourage healthy choices.
- Language encouraging nutrition promotion via signage, shelf talkers, and educational opportunities for guests.
- Training plan for new staff and volunteers on pantry policy, practices, and **Nutritious** foods.
- A strategy for sharing policy with the community.
  - *Example*: sharing on social media or food pantry's website.
- A plan for reviewing and revising the policy at least once a year.
  - Ensure the date the policy is reviewed is stated within the policy.

Action Steps

- Identify food ranking systems. View **Objective 6a** for more information on food sorting and ranking systems.
- Assist with the creation or revision of a nutrition policy.
- Provide examples of nutrition policies.
- Provide training to staff and volunteers.
- Assist with development of communication strategies to communicate with stakeholders about their nutrition policy.

Implementation Materials

To access materials created by University of Illinois Extension SNAP-Ed, visit **go.illinois.edu/NEFPATPlus5.** In this Box folder you will find the following materials:

- Sample Nutrition Policy-Short
- Sample Nutrition Policy-medium
- Nutrition Policy Worksheet

Online Resources

- Healthy Eating Research-Supporting Wellness at Pantries: **healthyeatingresearch.org/research/supporting-wellness-at-pantries-swap-toolkit-2021**
- The Role of Food Bank Nutrition Policies (starts on page 30): **feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/Nutrition-in-Food-Banking-Toolkit-v2_Final.pdf**
- UCONN Rudd Center, HER Guidelines Resources: **uconnruddcenter.org/her-guidelines**

Technology Tips

- Create social media posts to educate guests and community members on the importance of a healthy pantry environment. Consider posting links from relevant sources including Feeding America's Illuminating Intersections: Hunger and Health video to garner support.
  - Illuminating Intersections: Hunger and Health video: **youtube.com/watch?v=q0VQjtE8vRg**
- Post nutrition policy on the pantry's website or social media page to communicate to guests and the community the pantry's commitment to health. Check out Antigo Community Food Pantry's nutrition policy on their website!
  - **antigofoodpantry.com/nutrition-policy**

STRATEGY 5C

Has guidelines or practices that support customer service and inclusivity.

Creating a pantry space where all people feel welcome is an important step in providing equitable food access in communities. Food pantries can use written guidelines and practices to move towards a more relational and welcoming environment.

Pantries can do this by promoting the following

- **Offering choice:** Allowing customers to choose their food with dignity, through shopping, window, menu, or online ordering. as described in Objective 3.
  - Customers can select their own food by either shopping or ordering via a menu.
- **Create a safe space:** Creating a welcoming culture of dignity & respect.
  - Offer hours of operation that meet the needs of food pantry clients including weekends and evening hours.

- Use positive language and wording :
  - Strength-based: The use of language that focuses on strengths and abilities, rather than the weaknesses or limitations, of a person or people group.
  - Person-centered: This language prioritizes an individual's personhood above a condition often used to identify them. For example, refer to someone as a "person experiencing homelessness" instead of a "homeless person."
  - Program name(s): Calling a food pantry a "market."
  - Referring to individuals who visit food pantries as customers, guests, and/or neighbors.
- Use the languages spoken by your clients in written and spoken communications, including common cultural phrases or slang, when appropriate.
- Physical Environment and Organizational Systems
  - Welcoming signage: Signs and other visual displays that can help individuals feel welcome and safe in a space. Consider choosing posters and pictures of individuals that reflect the people and cultures served by the pantry
  - Intake process: Train volunteers on how to use this time to build relationships with pantry clients and consider changes to the pantry's layout that could increase the privacy of clients as they share their information.

Welcoming Environment, New Vision Food Pantry, Decatur, IL

- **Connect to Community:** Proving food pantry clients with the opportunity to connect with additional resources that support their health and wellbeing.
  - Provide training on trauma informed customer service for food pantry volunteers
  - Utilize a warm hand off or referral system. A warm hand off or referral is a gentle way to refer someone to another resource or agency. In this approach the referral agency reaches out to the client, rather than requiring the client to reach out to the agency.

Action Steps

- Provide customer service training for food pantry volunteers including trauma-informed practice.
- Assist pantry in developing guidelines to support inclusivity at the food pantry.
- Consider using the **Racial Equity Impact Assessment Tool** to inform action planning and policy decision making.

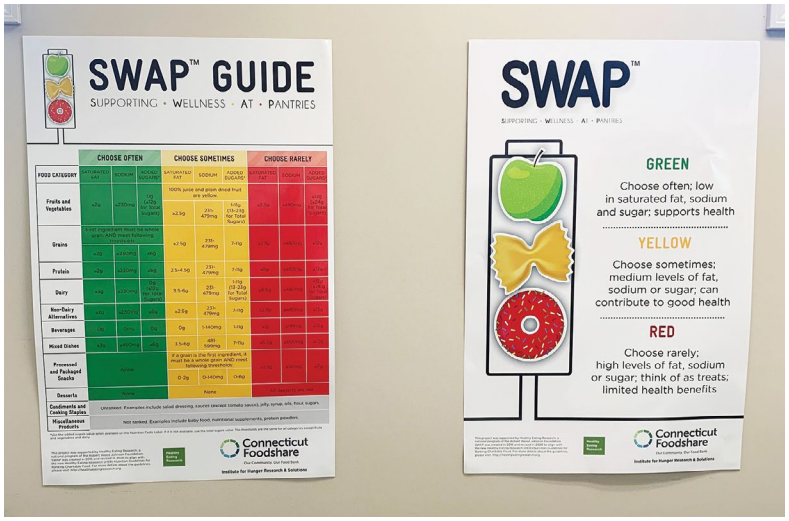
OBJECTIVE 6

Prioritizes Health & Inclusion in Pantry Operations

STRATEGY 6A

Has a system in place to identify the nutritional value of foods received.

Identifying the nutritional value of foods helps volunteers and food pantry clients find choices that meet their needs. Pantries can create a system using the **Nutritious** Foods List, MyPlate, or the Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines. The system could include color coding shopping lists, using stickers on certain items, posters, or placing items on labeled shelves.



A food pantry using SWAP in Henry County, IL.

Supporting Wellness at Pantries (SWAP), a program of the Institute for Hunger Research & Solutions at Connecticut Foodshare created to help pantries communicate the nutritional value of foods to pantry guests.[23] SWAP follows the Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines and uses a stoplight system to rank foods. When incorporating these standards into a policy or regular pantry practices, set goals that are feasible for the pantry. For example, a goal could be "the pantry will only purchase food ranked yellow or green but will accept all edible and safe donations."

SWAP can be implemented in a variety of ways. Shopping style food pantries can color code shelves red, yellow, and green, use shelf-talkers, signs, and other nudging strategies from **Objective 4** to indicate an item's rank and promote **Nutritious** choices. For menu and online style food pantries, foods can be listed by color ranking, have the ranking listed next to the item, or use specific icons to indicate their nutritional ranking.

Action Steps

- Provide assistance establishing an identification system.
- Organize pantry shopping list to match nutritious food identification system.
- Outline a ranking system in the food pantry's nutrition policy.
- Provide volunteer training on **HER Nutrition Guidelines** and implement nutrition ranking systems such as SWAP.
- Install signage to help volunteers rank foods according to the system selected.

Online Resources

- Supporting Wellness At Pantries (SWAP): **snapedtoolkit.org/interventions/programs/supporting-wellness-at-pantries-swap-using-the-her-nutrition-guidelines-for-the-charitable-food-system**
- WellSCAN, Food ranking calculator based on HER guidelines: **wellscan.io/calculator.html**

STRATEGY 6B

Uses labeling system to help clients find items for specific dietary needs.

Food pantry clients have high rates of diet-related diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease, to name a few.[2,17,45] Labeling foods that meet specific health criteria (like low sodium or gluten free) or cultural beliefs and preferences (like Halal or Kosher) helps clients find items that work in their lives. For menu and online style food pantries, sections can be labeled by dietary need for clients to choose from or can label individual items can be labeled individually using full words or abbreviations. For example, use GF next to gluten free foods. If using abbreviations, make sure to display an abbreviation key so clients know what they stand for.

Implementation Materials

- Understanding different diets flyer (available in English and in Spanish): **go.illinois.edu/NEFPATPlus6**

Online Resources

- OU Kosher, The Kosher Primer: **oukosher.org/the-kosher-primer**
- Halal Food Council USA: **halalfoodcouncilusa.com**

A gluten free section in Henry County, IL

A heart healthy nudge sign at a food pantry in Henry County IL

Action Steps

- Work with pantry to identify specific needs among pantry clients
- Provide pantry volunteers with training on reading nutrition labels and understanding different diets.
- Educate volunteers on how to set up shelving to identify dietary needs. Below are some examples of dietary needs you can designate shelves for:
  - Halal
  - Kosher
  - Gluten Free
  - Diabetic Friendly
  - Low Sodium
  - Other needs that may be present in your community
- Use stickers with large print to label items if they are on shelves mixed with a broader array of items.
- Install posters to help volunteers identify dietary food labels
- Provide nutritious recipes to meet dietary needs.
- Assist in creating additional donation lists to include specific foods for labeled sections.
- Connect to local resources for education and training on specific dietary patterns.

STRATEGY 6C

Offers food samples to promote nutritious foods to clients.

Food pantries can introduce clients to new foods and simple preparation techniques by offering food samples. This helps to encourage selection of less familiar food items while also reducing risk of trying new foods, leading to more consumption of new and healthy foods[18, 42]

Recipes used for taste tests should:

- Include at least one nutritious food.
- Have ingredients that are available in the pantry.
- Have few ingredients.
- Have ingredients that are low-cost.

A recipe taste test in Jackson County, IL

- Have minimal prep and cooking time.
- Utilize simple kitchen tools.
- Be easy to understand.
- Be written at an appropriate reading level for most pantry clients.
- Meet the cultural needs and preferences of pantry clients.

Action Steps

- Connect a food pantry to the local health department to understand food safety requirements and regulations for providing food samples.
- Provide or connect the food pantry with food safety training opportunities and resources.
- Connect food pantries with organizations who could host food sampling events during a food distribution such as the local SNAP-Education or Extension office.
- Assist a food pantry in finding nutritious recipes showcasing ingredients found in the food pantry.
- Provide recipe cards for food pantries to distribute during their sampling events.

Technology Tips

- Share pictures of clients trying new foods or post about upcoming food sampling events on website and social media pages.

Online Resources

- EAT.MOVE.SAVE.: **eat-move-save.extension.illinois.edu/save**
- USDA Recipe Collection: **nutrition.gov/topics/shopping-cooking-and-meal-planning/recipe-collection**
- MyPlate Recipes: **myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen/recipes**

STRATEGY 6D

Pantry clients serve on pantry board or other decision-making groups within the pantry.

Including pantry clients and those with lived experience in decision-making groups can help food pantry managers prioritize needs and other improvements desired most by clients visiting the pantry. Consider establishing a pantry board or pantry advisory board, if one does not already exist. A pantry board is made up of pantry clients and community members for shared decision-making and to advise pantry initiatives. A pantry advisory board is a structured collaborative developed to engage with decision makers such as the pantry manager or lead volunteer.

Action Steps

- Provide pantry assistance in recruiting pantry clients to serve on pantry board or advisory committee.
  - Invite food pantry clients to serve on the pantry board or advisory committee.
  - Consider reimbursing pantry board or committee members for their time and expertise.
  - Consider providing childcare at meetings.
  - Establish day and time of board meetings to that match the availability of most members of the board.

Local Resources

- Consider reaching out to your local Extension office, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club or Community Foundation to see if they can provide training and support in developing a pantry board or advisory committee.

Online Resources

- Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc., For more on how the Center for Health Care Strategies Infographic: **chcs.org/media/Community-Engagement-Infographic-12.17.19.pdf**
- Community Tool Box, Creating and Maintaining Coalitions and Partnerships: **ctb.ku.edu/en/creating-and-maintaining-coalitions-and-partnerships**
- USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, College Partners Director (Source to find your state's Extension Program): **nifa.usda.gov/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-partner-website-directory?state=All&field_map_filter_value=Extension&antibot_key=QGSmSoh0e7n-Uc7AvB1x2DgBlTFDoHZCd2DyBlYYjvE&page=1**

Action Steps

- Provide pantry manager assistance in establishing a pantry board. A pantry board is used to make decisions around food pantry policies and practices. For maximum success in developing a pantry board, remember to do the following:[6]
  - Outline goals and purpose for the board.
  - Determine the board's level of power or influence in decision making for the food pantry.
  - Outline roles and responsibilities of board members and responsibilities of specific roles on the board including chair, secretary, treasurer, member, etc.
  - Consider the ideal composition of the board (community leaders, pantry volunteers, pantry clients, etc.).
  - Plan to recruit potential board members including members of the community, community leaders and pantry goers.
  - If possible, provide compensation or other incentives to board members. Examples include compensation for time, meals during meetings, transportation vouchers, childcare, and more.
  - Implement advisory board.

STRATEGY 6E

Asks about and responds to client needs.

Asking and responding to client needs is an important part of creating a welcoming and inclusive environment in a pantry. This allows for a more dignified experience and can help minimize the use of resources on unneeded services and products. When seeking client feedback, make sure to ask about religious and cultural dietary needs and preferences.

Action Steps

- Survey clients, formally or informally. Formal methods include printed and digital questionnaires, and informal methods include conversations to identify changes to be made at the pantry.
  - Consider asking about policies, pantry hours, services available to pantry guests, etc.
- Work with the pantry to develop a system to follow-up with requests and feedback.

STRATEGY 6F

Creates a welcoming and inclusive space.

The overall physical environment of a pantry should communicate a feeling of welcome, inclusivity, and safety for all. The way a person feels when walking into an environment can influence their food choices. Be aware of what the pantry environment communicates and then look for ways to make it a more comfortable space for clients, staff, and volunteers. Simple things like friendly staff, pleasant smells, and overall cleanliness can greatly improve the space. Look for ways to engage community groups in updating pantry spaces, including having a local artist paint a healthy-living mural or engaging a youth group in building new angled shelving.

A welcoming entryway in Johnson County, IL

Action Steps

- Create a pleasant pantry atmosphere. Use natural light (if possible) or other lights to make space bright.
- Have posters that include images of people that represent the community being served.
- Train volunteers in proper customer service practices.
- Offer foods that are culturally relevant to those being served.
- Implement a variety of other strategies mentioned in this TA guide, like client choice. This will help provide a dignified experience to those visiting the pantry.
- Reduce the wait time by offering appointments or being open more days and hours. Create a pleasant wait experience by providing seating and space indoors.
- Identify pantry hours that meet the needs of pantry clients such as evening hours or weekends.

STRATEGY 6G

Provides volunteer education on relevant topics.

Volunteers play important roles and are key to well-run food pantries. Training volunteers on topics valued by the pantry helps to ensure consistent practices and develops a pantry culture supportive of health, wellness, and positive customer service.

Action Steps

- Survey volunteers on what trainings or topics they are interested in.
- Connect with community local organizations including SNAP-Ed, food banks, United Way, Health Departments or Extension to see what trainings are offered to volunteers.
- Host a training for food pantry volunteers. Consider topics including:
  - Bundling
  - Nudges at the food pantry
  - Nutrition policy
  - Trauma informed care in food pantries
  - Food safety
  - The connection between nutrition security and health
  - MyPlate
  - Customer Service
  - Grant writing to support nutrition initiatives

Online Resources

- Food Research & Action Center, Hunger & Poverty in America: **frac.org/hunger-poverty-america**
- Feeding America, Our Research: **feedingamerica.org/research**
- More than Food Consulting, News and Events: **ittakesmorethanfood.org/events**
- l United States Department of Agriculture, SNAP-Ed Connection: Nutrition Education Materials: **snaped.fns.usda.gov/nutrition-education/nutritioneducation-materials**
- Choose My Plate Tip Sheets: **choosemyplate.gov/myplate-tip-sheets**
- University of Illinois Extension, Eat. Move. Save: **eat-move-save.extension.illinois.edu**
- USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, College Partners Director (Source to find your state's Extension Program): **nifa.usda.gov/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-partner-website-directory?state=All&field_map_filter_value=Extension&antibot_key=QGSmSoh0e7n-Uc7AvB1x2DgBlTFDoHZCd2DyBlYYjvE&page=1**

OBJECTIVE 7

Promotes Partnerships & Provides Additional Resources

Social Determinants of Health including access to resources, social networks, and power dynamics have a impact on the health and well-being of an individual, in addition to individual factors including behaviors and genetics.[8] Sections of this objective all work to address **Social Determinants of Health**. Social Determinants of Health are nonmedical factors of an individual's environment that impact their health in the places they work, live, and play. Examples include access to healthcare, educational opportunities, the built environment, and more.[37] Social Determinants of Health contribute to a wide range of health inequities. For example, pantry guests who do not have access to nutritious foods are less likely to have a healthy diet raising their risk for diet-related chronic diseases including diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Simply offering healthful foods will not eliminate these health inequities. Food pantries can help to address the root causes of inequities by serving as a connector to other community services to address various needs.

A Conceptual Framework:
Cycle of Food Insecurity and Chronic Disease

Source: hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/understand-food-insecurity/hunger-health-101/

Through partnership, food pantries can leverage their resources, and the resources of their partners to implement innovative programming and minimize competition and duplication of services within a community, eventually leading to sustainability.

Action Steps

- Refer clients to local agencies for additional services with warm hand offs.
- Market resources to pantry clients avilable from other community partners.
- Create and/or update resource areas within a food pantry. This might include having a computer and/or printer on site for clients to use.
- Provide pantry clients with eligibility information for local, state and federal assistance programs.
- Assist the food pantry in hosting a resource fair to connect pantry clients with local social services agencies.
- Invite local agencies to host a booth during pantry hours or offer onsite classes and workshops.

Online Resources

- Healthy People 2030: **health.gov/healthypeople**
- CDC Social Determinants of Health video: **youtube.com/watch?v=u_IoBt7Nicw**
- University of Wisconsin-Madison Public Health Institute, Health Equity Training Modules: **uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/match/health-equity-training-modules**

STRATEGY 7A

Partners with a variety of external groups.

Clients seeking help at food pantries often need more support than the pantry can provide on its own. Individuals might need additional help with medical care, housing, bills, childcare, education, signing up for federal assistance programs, like WIC or SNAP, and more. By partnering with other organizations in the community, a food pantry can connect their clients with local resources clients might not be aware of or able to access.

Increasing partner connections also directly supports the food pantry through sharing of resources, learning from others, and strengthening social support networks. These opportunities can be done through one-on-one partnerships or by joining local and regional coalitions. Coalitions are multi-agency groups that work together to accomplish common goals in the community they serve. By working together and leveraging resources, coalitions can accomplish goals not feasible for individual organizations to do alone.

Action Steps

- Connect the food pantry to local organizations that could help meet the needs of clients. Ask them to share flyers, host a table at a food distribution, or join a resource fair if the food pantry has the capacity. Below are local sites and organizations who may be interested in food pantry partnerships:
  - Local health department
  - Hospitals
  - Insurance Representatives
  - Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC)
  - Local State Department of Human Services office
  - WIC
  - United Way
  - Head Start and Early Head Start Programs
  - Local Cooperative Extension office
  - Local universities and community colleges
  - 4-H
  - Libraries
  - Local coalitions
  - Additional food pantries or food resources, including meal sites and mobile food distributions

Online Resources

- Find Food Illinois: **eat-move-save.extension.illinois.edu**
- Meal Connect: **mealconnect.org**
- United Way, United Ways in the United States: **unitedway.org/local/united-states**
- United Way 211: **unitedway.org/our-impact/featured-programs/2-1-1**
- Feeding America, Find a Food Bank: **feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank**
- USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, College Partners Director (Source to find your state's Extension Program): **nifa.usda.gov/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-partner-website-directory?state=All&field_map_filter_value=Extension&antibot_key=QGSmSoh0e7n-Uc7AvB1x2DgBITFDoHZCd2DyBlYYjvE&page=1**

STRATEGY 7B

Provides education, programs, or resources to clients directly or through partnerships.

Nutrition or cooking

Nutrition education is an important part of empowering food pantry clients to choose **Nutritious** foods. Pantries can offer programs themselves, or partner with a local organization to provide education during special events or before, during, or after pantry distributions. For maximum impact, pair education with nutrition information provided through nudge strategies described in Objective 4. Examples of nutrition topics include: MyPlate food groups, how to read a nutrition facts label, food demonstrations, and more.

Action Steps

- Provide training to pantry staff and volunteers on basic nutrition topics so they can share accurate information with clients.
- Identify free printable resources related to nutrition.
- Connect to local providers who offer nutrition education or cooking demonstrations including the local Extension office or local SNAP-Education office, dietetic intern programs or culinary schools.
- Provide information or brochures on local events and services offering nutrition education.

Online Resources

- Healthy Eating Research- Supporting United States Department of Agriculture, SNAP-Ed Connection: Nutrition Education Materials: **snaped.fns.usda.gov/resources/nutrition-education-materials**
- My Plate Print Materials: **myplate.gov/resources/print-materials**
- University of Illinois Extension | Eat. Move. Save: **eatmovesave.org**

Gardening

Onsite gardens are a great way to increase the amount, variety, and cultural familiarity of fresh produce offered in the pantry. Pantries can also use gardens as an opportunity to teach clients how to grow their own food. Collaborating with local Extension programs or other sources of gardening expertise is a good way to implement new gardens or provide education to pantry clients. Resources available via partnership might include information on growing produce, gardening tools, seeds, soil, etc. Additional garden resources can be found in Objective 3.

Youth gardening education at Aurora Interfaith Community Garden in Aurora, IL

Free seeds and gardening information offered in Massac County, IL

Signage at St Ann's Garden of Hope in Peoria, IL

Action Steps

- Help pantry assess clients' preferences, dietary and cultural needs to determine what produce items are grown.
- Link pantry with community resources that can assist in starting a garden or providing educational programs about gardening.
- Connect pantry to community gardens, non-profit organizations promoting gardening, Plant A Row for the Hungry, or youth groups like 4-H who are involved in gardening projects.
- Assist in finding and writing grant applications to develop or sustain donation garden projects.
- Connect with your local Extension office.

Online Resources

- University of Illinois Extension, Community Garden Webinar Series: **go.illinois.edu/communitygarden**
- University of Illinois Extension, Guide to Growing Herbs: **extension.illinois.edu/herbs**
- University of Illinois Extension, Guide to Growing Vegetables: **extension.illinois.edu/veggies**
- University of Illinois Extension, Vegetable Solutions: **extension.illinois.edu/vegproblems**
- United States Department of Agriculture, Lets Glean! United We Serve Toolkit: **usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda_gleaning_toolkit.pdf**
- USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, College Partners Director (Source to find your state's Extension Program): **nifa.usda.gov/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-partner-website-directory?state=All&field_map_filter_value=Extension&antibot_key=QGSmSoh0e7n-Uc7AvB1x2DgBlTFDoHZCd2DyBlYYjvE&page=1**

Finances or Financial Empowerment

Income and financial status is a social determinant of health that can influence healthy equity. Individuals seeking assistance at food pantries may benefit from knowledge, financial education, tools, and resources. Financial empowerment can help individuals live healthier lives by equipping families with the knowledge and skills to choose nutritious foods within their budget. By managing overall household budget, there is room for food purchases and healthier options.[49] Below are some resources on finances and financial empowerment:

Action Steps

- Assist in developing a handout with local and nationwide financial resources.
- Connect pantry with local financial and financial education organizations.
- Connect with your local Extension office.

Local Resources

- Extension consumer finance programs
- Banks to host a free class or offer financial planning services.
- Habitat for Humanity
- Chamber of Commerce
- Housing Authority
- Local colleges or universities

Online Resources

- EAT.MOVE.SAVE, Save: **eat-move-save.extension.illinois.edu/save**
- University of Illinois Extension, Finances: **extension.illinois.edu/finances**
- Consumer Finances Protection Bureau, Educator Resources: **consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools**
- MyMoney.gov, Financial Literacy Resources: **mymoney.gov/**
- Utah State University Extension, PowerPay debt reduction tool: **extension.usu.edu/powerpay**
- Federal Reserve, Federal Reserve Education: **federalreserveeducation.org**

- USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, College Partners Director (Source to find your state's Extension Program): **nifa.usda.gov/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-partner-website-directory?state=All&field_map_filter_value=Extension&antibot_key=QGSmSoh0e7n-Uc7AvB1x2DgBlTFDoHZCd2DyBlYYjvE&page=1**
- Toolkit, Food Bank Healthcare Partnerships: **feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/FA_HCP_Toolkit_2022_FINAL.pdf**

Health related programs or screenings

Basic health screenings, like blood pressure and blood sugar checks, help individuals understand their health status, especially for conditions that can occur without symptoms like high blood pressure and diabetes.[15,41] Early detection of chronic diseases gives clients the opportunity to act quickly and receive care from a health professional to prevent serious complications or reduce severity of the disease, if treated. With this knowledge, clients can make more informed food choices in the pantry to manage their health.

Health screenings hosted at local food pantry

Action Steps

- Connect with health departments, colleges, hospitals, and nursing or medical schools who can provide screening services.
- Provide education to pantry staff and volunteers on how hunger impacts health.
- Assist pantry in promoting health related programs or screenings to pantry clients.
- Assist pantry with clearly labeling resource sections.

Online Resources

- Capital Area Food Bank Food + Health: **capitalareafoodbank.org/what-we-do/food-plus-partnerships/food-plus-health**
- Feeding America Connecting Health and Food Access: **hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/2019/01/prescription-healthy-food**
- CDC National Diabetes Prevention Programs: **cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention/program-providers.htm**

STRATEGY 7C

Provides information of referrals to local resources.

As mentioned in the introduction to Objective 7, food pantries can serve as a connector within a community. Connecting pantry clients with information about programs available can give additional support.

A community resource board in Champaign County, IL

SNAP & other food assistance programs

SNAP, WIC, and Senior Farmers Market coupon programs are federally funded programs that provide funds or vouchers to purchase food to those who meet eligibility criteria. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families.[39] Participants can use funds to purchase foods including grains, fruits, vegetables, meats, fish, poultry, and dairy products.

WIC is a Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for eligible Women, Infants, and Children. The WIC Program provides supplemental foods, health care referrals and nutrition education at no cost to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women and their infants and children up to 5 years of age who are found to be at nutritional risk.[48] WIC also sponsors a summer Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) to expand awareness and access to locally grown foods. WIC participants can receive FMNP coupons to redeem at participating farm stands and farmers markets in their community.[47]

The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (**SFMNP**) provides low-income seniors with coupons for use at local farmers' markets.[35] Coupons are redeemed at participating farmers markets, roadside stands, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs for eligible foods like fruits and vegetables. Meals on Wheels provides nutritious meals to low-income seniors through home delivery services or congregate meal sites.

Additionally, the USDA funds the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) to support nutrition security of low-income

seniors.[11] CSFP products and boxes are distributed through local food banks to local pantries and community agencies within their network.

The National School Lunch and National School Breakfast programs are income-based programs that provide free and reduced meals to students whose families fall below certain income levels.[28] Individual schools or whole districts with high levels of low-income or at-risk students, can participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).[12] CEP provides free meals to all students within the school or district regardless of income level. Meals reimbursed by these programs are required to meet certain nutritional requirements to ensure that students have access to nutritious meals.

In addition to federal and state programs, many communities have local organizations and nonprofits, including churches and after school programs, that independently provide free food or meals to the community.

Action Steps

- Compile local, regional, and national information on how and where clients can sign up for food assistance programs.
- Connect pantry to local/regional organizations who administer SNAP and WIC programs.
- Locate farmers' markets that currently accept SNAP, WIC and SFMNP coupons, and those that participate in "double-up" programs and help pantry advertise those markets.
- Collaborate with the local health department, farmers, and farmers' market managers to increase the number of redemption sites for SNAP, WIC and SFMNP dollars.
- Provide brochures promoting local food assistance resources.
- Assist pantry with clearly labeling resource sections.
- Connect pantry with **Find Food Illinois Map** or other similar mapping resources including Feeding America's Meal Connect website. Pantries can host the resource on their webpage or social media accounts.

Online Resources

- Find Food Illinois Map: **go.illinois.edu/findfood**
- USDA, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: **fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program**
- USDA, Special Supplemental Nutrition Programs for Women, Infants, and Children: **fns.usda.gov/wic**
- USDA, Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program: **fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/senior-farmers-market-nutrition-program**
- USDA, Commodity Supplemental Food Program: **fns.usda.gov/csfp/commodity-supplemental-food-program**
- USDA, National School Lunch Program: **fns.usda.gov/nslp**

Medicaid and/or Affordable Health Care

Healthcare programs like Medicare, Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) and other government or privately run programs can help meet the medical and health needs of pantry clients. Medicare is the federal health insurance program for people who are 65 or older.[46] Some younger individuals with disabilities and those with End Stage Renal Disease may also be eligible. Medicaid provides health coverage to millions of eligible low-income adults, children, pregnant women, elderly adults, and people with disabilities.[24] CHIP is a low-cost health insurance plan for children in families who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid. Each state determines its own qualifying factors and associated costs, though routine "well child" and dental visits are completely covered by this program.[40] Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) provide medical care for those without or with limited insurance coverage.

Action Steps

- Connect pantry to local resources including public health departments, Federally Qualified Health Centers and nonprofit organizations offering affordable healthcare assistance.
- Assist pantry with clearly labeling resource sections.
- Connect pantry to local library or healthcare organizations for donated books on health topics.

Online Resources

- Medicaid.gov: **medicaid.gov**
- Medicare.gov: **medicare.gov**
- Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP): **healthcare.gov/medicaid-chip/childrens-health-insurance-program**
- Find a Federally Qualified Health Center: **fqhc.org**

Physical Activity

Engaging in regular physical activity has been shown to help prevent and manage chronic health conditions and diseases including heart disease, diabetes, stroke, sleep disorders, and many others. Additional benefits of physical activity include improved brain health, reduced pain and decreased risk of falls or injury from a fall. The Department of Health and Human Services recommends that American adults engage in a minimum of 150-minutes of moderately intense physical activity per week to experience health benefits.[4,43] Individuals experiencing food insecurity have been associated with greater barriers or obstacles to adhering to physical activity guidelines.[19]

Online Resources

- Eat.Move.Save. Move Resources: **eat-move-save.extension.illinois.edu/move**
- Spend Smart. Eat Smart. Move Resources: **spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/physical-activity**

Action Steps

- Provide various physical activity resources.
- Connect pantry clients to local health intervention programming.
- Provide resources about local walking paths, parks, and hiking trails.
- Provide positive health messaging at the pantry site.
- Host nutrition education and physical activity program or education booth at site.
- Assist pantry with clearly labeling resource sections.

Services to meet needs of specific populations

Some populations may need specific or additional resources reflective of their individualized circumstances. Connecting clients with these resources can reduce barriers to accessing services and help they may need. Individuals belonging to special populations might identify by different terms. It is important to ask and listen to the clients you serve. The list below are some groups you may want to give special consideration to. Keep in mind that your community might have other special populations beyond what is included here:

- Racial/ethnic minority groups
- LGBTQ+
- Veterans
- People with disabilities
- Unhoused individuals
- Individuals with limited English proficiency
- Older Adults/ Seniors
- Immigrants/ Refugees

Action Steps

- Assist pantry in assessing the needs of clients within their pantry, including those of special groups. Needs may include:
  - Hours of operation
  - Location for mobile food distribution
  - Materials provided in multiple languages
- Provide information on local support groups or resources for specific audiences identified by pantry needs.

According to the Americans with Disability Act, "Service animals are defined as dogs [and miniature horse] that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities."[1] Only dogs and miniature horses are considered service animals under the ADA.1 Any other animal a food pantry client might have with them is not guaranteed the same rights in public space. Service animals are allowed everywhere the public is welcomed, and their owners do not need to provide special documentation for their service animal. It is important to note that many disabilities are not clearly visible, such as epilepsy and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and individuals with these disabilities have the same rights and accommodations for their service animals as those with more visible disabilities. When it is not clear what service(s) a service animal provides, only two questions can be asked:[1]

- Is the dog [or miniature horse] required because of a disability?
- What work or task has this dog [or miniature horse] been trained to do?

Under protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act, no further questions are allowed to try and assess the validity of a client having a service animal, including asking a client what disability they have.[1] An individual can only be asked to remove their service animal from the premises if the animal is out of control and the owner isn't able to regain control or if it is not housebroken.[1] When there is legitimate reason for the removal of a service animal, the food pantry must make accommodations so that the individual can access the food pantry's services without the animal's presence.[1] An example of an accommodation in a food pantry is allowing a client to select their food through a menu and a volunteer would gather the items selected. For more information on service animals, a link to the ADA's website is included under online resources.

Online Resources

- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): **nami.org/home**
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: **va.gov**
- The Trevor Project (nonprofit supporting the LGBTQ+ communities): **thetrevorproject.org/resources/**
- Eldercare Locator: **eldercare.acl.gov/Public/About/Index.aspx**
- Administration for Community Living (resources for supporting seniors and individuals with disabilities in the community): **acl.gov/about-community-living**
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Homelessness Resources and Programs: **hhs.gov/programs/social-services/homelessness/resources/index.html**
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Supporting Diverse Communities: **afsp.org/supporting-diverse-communities**
- ADA Requirements: Service Animals: **ada.gov/resources/service-animals-2010-requirements/#:~:text=When%20it%20is%20not%20obvious,dog%20been%20trained%20to%20perform**

STRATEGY 7D

Provides or promotes services that address transportation and mobility barriers of clients.

Mobile Markets

Food banks, food pantries and community organizations may arrange mobile food distributions to reduce transportation barriers in communities with low food access.[26] Mobile food distributions arrive at a specific location for an allotted period to distribute free foods. This type of distribution model helps to meet those that are in need where they are. There are a variety of different mobile market distribution models depending on the need of the community.

A mobile food pantry located in Marion County, IL

Action Steps

- Promote mobile food distributions throughout the community.
- Assist in planning a mobile food distribution. Consider location, time, and day of the week.
- Assist pantry with clearly labeling resource sections.
- Connect to other pantries or food banks in the area who have hosted a mobile food distribution.
- Identify locations of mobile markets.
- Assist pantry in using nudge techniques (Objective 4) at a mobile market.

Online Resources

- Feeding America, Find Your Local Food Bank: **feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank**

Home Delivery

Some individuals in your community may have mobility or transportation issues resulting in them being unable to access the needed resources. These individuals might be seniors, younger adults with a disability, community members providing childcare at home during pantry hours, or those lacking transportation to get to and from a food pantry. Meals on Wheels is a great program to refer qualifying seniors to. If a food pantry has the capacity, they could apply for grants or local funding to develop a home delivery service.

Action Steps

- Connect a food pantry with Meals on Wheels.
- Assist a food pantry in finding and applying for grants to start their own home delivery service.
- Assist pantry with clearly labeling resource sections.

Online Resources

- Meals on Wheels: **mealsonwheelsamerica.org**

Transportation vouchers or passes

Transportation is a limiting factor for many individuals and families in need of food assistance. Some people don't have vehicles while others may not be able to afford repairs or regular expenses, like gas and insurance. By providing bus passes or transportation vouchers to clients, food pantries can help them meet their basic food needs. Transportation vouchers and passes can also be used by clients.

Action Steps

- Help pantries establish funding sources to purchase vouchers or passes.
- Work with the local transit authority on developing a reduced fare for travel to pantries.
- Work with local hospitals to provide vouchers/passes to patients that screen as food insecure.
- Help pantry establish a sponsor program for donors to sponsor rides to the pantry.
- Assist pantry with clearly labeling resource sections.

Online Resources

- Rappahannock United Way, Ride United [this is here as an example and is not a nationwide service]: **rappahannockunitedway.org/get-help/transportation**

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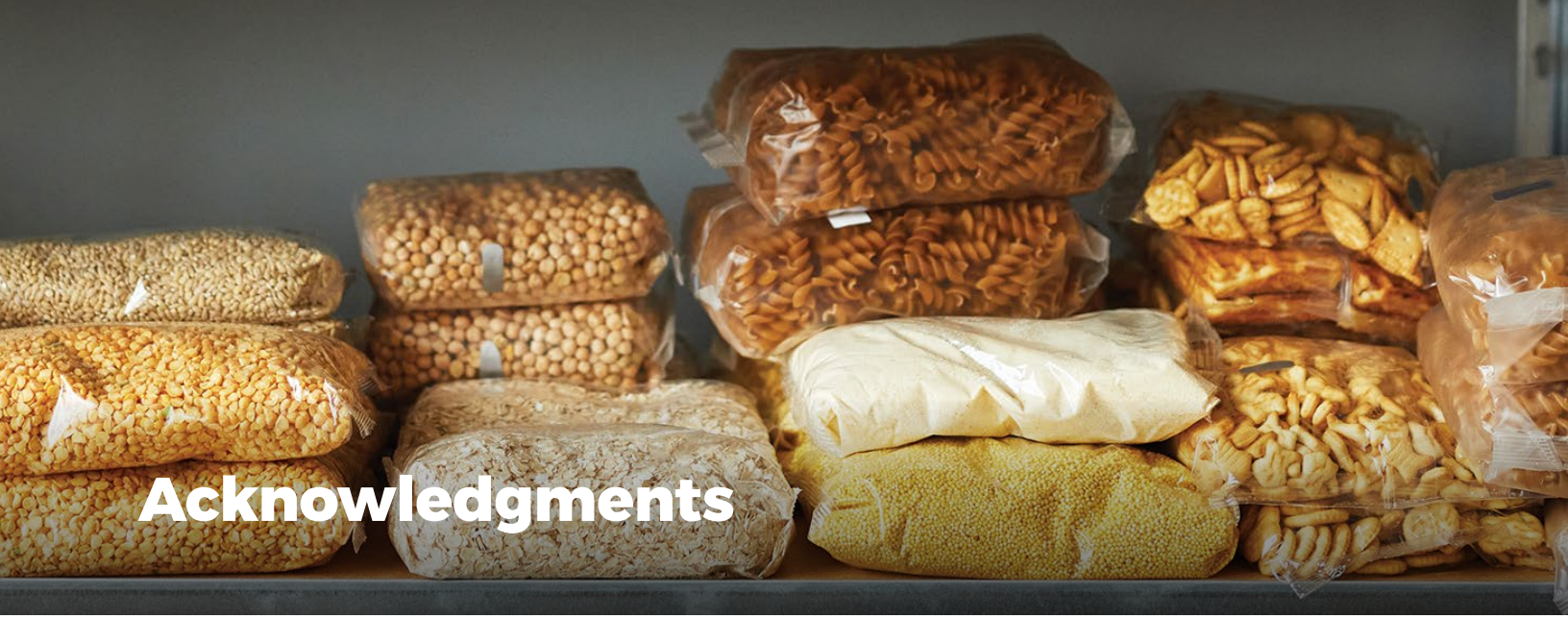

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Appendix A

Nutritious Foods List Resources

- USDA's MyPlate (**myplate.gov**)
- HER Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System (**healthyeatingresearch.org/research/healthy-eating-research-nutrition-guidelines-for-the-charitable-food-system**)
- The Healthy Choice by FoodLink (**foodlinkny.org**)
- FDA's Food Labeling Guide (**fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/guidance-industry-food-labeling-guide**)

Nutritious Foods List[16, 20, 23, 27]

- **Fruits:** Fresh, frozen, canned, jarred, pouches, dried/dehydrated or 100% juice
  - Items must be packaged in water or 100% juice and have no added sugar or sauces
- **Vegetables:** Fresh, frozen, canned, jarred, pouches, dried/dehydrated
  - Items must be packaged with no added sauces, no added salt, or labeled low sodium (≤140mg sodium per serving)
- **Animal-Based Protein:** Whole or ground lean cuts (sirloin (90/10), chuck (80/20), round (85/15), venison, skinless poultry), Fish or shellfish, Canned, jarred, or pouches of chicken or fish, Eggs
  - Fresh and frozen items should have no breading
  - Packaged meats must be packaged in water
- **Plant-Based Protein:** Dried beans, dried lentils, or canned beans, nuts and seeds, tofu, tempeh, or other soy or vegetable-based
  - Items with no added salt, seasoning, or labeled low sodium (≤140mg sodium per serving)
- **Grains:** Whole grain breads—bread, rolls, whole grain pancake mix, bagels, pita, tortillas, etc., Whole grains—brown/wild rice, barley, plain oats, bulgur, quinoa, whole wheat flour, etc., Whole wheat pasta, Cereal
  - Items should have whole grain as the first ingredient or be labeled a Good or Excellent source of fiber (≥3g dietary fiber per serving)
- **Dairy:** Reduced fat (2%), low-fat (1%) or non-fat (skim) milk—unflavored, Low-fat or non-fat yogurt (≤3g fat per serving), Low-fat or non-fat cheese or cottage cheese (≤3g fat per serving), Non-Dairy Alternatives (e.g., soy milk, almond milk), unsweetened plain, or unsweetened vanilla
  - Consider fresh and shelf-stable items

Appendix B

MyPlate Fruits & Vegetables List

Berries

- blueberries
- boysenberries
- cranberries
- currants
- dewberries
- goji berries
- gooseberries
- huckleberries
- kiwifruit
- lingonberries (cowberries)
- loganberries
- mulberries
- raspberries
- strawberries

Other fruits

- apples
- apricots
- Asian pears
- atemoya
- bananas
- Buddha's hand
- cactus pears
- calamondin
- cherimoya
- cherries
- dates
- dragon fruit
- durian
- feijoas
- figs
- fruit cocktail
- grapefruit
- grapes
- guava
- jackfruit
- kumquats
- lemons
- limes
- loquats
- lychee
- mangoes
- mangosteen
- nectarines
- oranges
- papaya
- passion fruit
- pawpaws
- peaches
- pears
- persimmons
- pineapple
- plums
- pluots
- pomegranate
- pomelos
- prickly pears
- prunes
- quince
- raisins
- rambutan
- rhubarb
- sapote
- satsuma

- soursop
- star fruit
- tamarind
- tangerines
- tangelos
- tejocote

Fruit juices

- apple juice
- cranberry juice
- grape juice
- grapefruit juice
- mango juice
- orange juice
- papaya juice
- pineapple juice
- pomegranate juice
- prune juice
- tangerine juice

Melons

- cantaloupe
- casaba
- honeydew
- horned melon (kiwano)
- watermelon

Dark-green vegetables

- amaranth leaves
- arugula (rocket)
- basil
- beet greens
- bitter melon leaves
- bok choy
- broccoli
- broccoli rabe (rapini)
- broccolini
- chamnamul
- chard
- chrysanthemum leaves
- cilantro
- collard greens
- cress
- dandelion greens
- dark-green leafy lettuce
- endive
- escarole
- kale
- lambsquarters
- mesclun
- mixed greens
- mustard greens
- nettles
- poke greens
- romaine lettuce
- spinach
- Swiss chard
- taro leaves
- turnip greens
- watercress

Red and orange vegetables

- acorn squash
- butternut squash
- calabaza
- carrots
- hubbard squash
- kabocha squash
- pimento/pimiento
- pumpkin
- red and orange bell peppers
- red chili peppers
- red peppers
- sweet potatoes
- tomatoes
- 100% vegetable juice
- winter squash

Beans, peas, and lentils

- bayo beans
- bean burger
- black beans
- black-eyed peas
- brown beans

- chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
- cow peas
- edamame (young soybeans)
- falafel (spiced, mashed chickpeas)
- fava beans (broad beans)
- hummus (chickpea spread)
- kidney beans
- lentils
- lima beans (mature)
- mung beans
- navy beans
- pigeon peas
- pink beans
- pinto beans
- soybeans
- split peas
- white beans

Starchy vegetables

- breadfruit
- burdock root
- cassava
- corn
- fufu
- green bananas
- green lima beans
- green peas
- hominy
- jicama
- lotus root
- parsnips
- plantains
- potatoes
- salsify
- tapioca taro root (dasheen or yautia)
- water chestnuts
- yams
- yucca

Other vegetables

- alfalfa sprouts
- arrowroot
- artichokes
- asparagus
- avocado
- bamboo shoots
- bean sprouts
- beets
- bitter melon (bitter gourd, balsam pear)
- broccoflower
- Brussels sprouts
- cabbage
- cactus pads (nopales)
- cauliflower
- celeriac
- celery
- chayote (mirliton)
- chives
- cucumbers
- daikon
- drumstick pods (moringa)
- eggplant
- fennel bulb
- fiddlehead ferns
- garlic
- ginger root
- green peppers
- green beans
- hearts of palm
- Jerusalem artichokes (sunchokes)
- jute
- kohlrabi
- leeks
- iceberg lettuce
- luffa (Chinese okra)
- mushrooms
- okra
- onions
- pattypan squash
- purslane
- radicchio
- radishes
- red cabbage
- rutabaga
- seaweed
- scallions
- snow peas
- sorrel
- spaghetti squash
- tomatillos
- turnips
- wax beans
- yellow squash
- zucchini

Appendix C:
NEFPAT+ Action Planning Template and Sample

SNAP-Ed Project Implementation Plan

This template is for SNAP-Ed Unit PSE teams to use in strategizing, organizing, and implementing site-based and/or multi-partner interventions. Plans should list all activities included in the intervention, adding new activities/strategies as they develop. Plans should align with the partner(s) level of comfort and readiness to make changes.

Partner/Site: _____

	Project Goals and Priorities:				
Phase	**Activities**	**Required Materials/Actions**	**Who will do? (List role or person)**	**Target Date**	**Actual Date**
Short					
Short					
Short					
Medium					
Medium					
Medium					
Long					
Long					
Long					
Sustainability Strategies (Ex		**Is there a plan to adopt this strategy?** (Options: No Plans to Adopt, Plans to Adopt, In Process/Partially Adopted, Fully in Place)	**Who will do?**	**Target Date**	**Actual Date**

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Key Terms:

These time periods are an example of how an intervention could be carried out over one year. Interventions can last longer or shorter depending on partner readiness, needs and amount/type of work to be done.

Short-term = Activities occurring within the first 0-3+ months of the partnership.
Medium-term = Activities occurring within 3-6+ months of the partnership.
Long-term = Activities occurring within 6-12+ months of the partnership.
Sustainable Plans & Strategies = Actions taken to ensure changes are kept in place after the partnership with SNAP-Ed ends.
Pre-assessment = Done at the beginning of the partnership, before any work has been carried out.
Post-assessment = Done after changes have been adopted and PIP implemented. Recommend waiting at least 6 months (no sooner 3). You can do multiple post-assessments if the intervention plan is carried out over a longer period.

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SNAP-Ed Project Implementation Plan

This template is for SNAP-Ed Unit PSE teams to use in strategizing, organizing, and implementing site-based and/or multi-partner interventions. Plans should list all activities included in the intervention, adding new activities/strategies as they develop. Plans should align with the partner(s) level of comfort and readiness to make changes.

Partner/Site: Food Pantry_____ Pre-assess Date:_____ Post-assess Date(s): _____

	Project Goals and Priorities:				
Phase	**Activities**	**Required Materials/Actions**	**Who will do? (List role or person)**	**Target Date**	**Actual Date**
Short	Have initial meeting to determine organization's needs and how we can help them	- Meeting hosted at Macon County Extension office	UE/ EPC	April 2021	April 6, 2021
Short	Connect Pantry Coordinator with CW for direct ed	- Connect pantry coordinator with CW	EPC		April 6, 2021
Short	Provide healthy recipe cards to be distributed at food distribution	- Monthly emails to determine pantry inventory for the week - Print appropriate recipe cards for the week	EPC	April 2021	April 6, 2021
Medium	Connect food pantry coordinator to sources of fresh and healthier items to be distributed	- Connect with Central Illinois Foodbank - Exec. Dir. Applied to be a Central IL Foodbank partner on his own, but the UE has offered to assist throughout the process (April 2022)	UE/ EPC	May 2021	July 2022
Medium	Work with food pantry	- Assess space and needs (food	UE/ EPC	July 2022	

	coordinator to determine what needs to be done to transition to more client choice	distributions take place in a multi-purpose space) - Make materials needed list - Design layout			
Medium	Acquire materials and funding to purchase the materials needed to transition pantry into full client choice	- Connect OKO with local organizations with items to donate - Apply for grants to purchase materials	UE	August 2022	
Medium	NEFPAT Pre-Assessment	- iPad for pictures - print NEFPAT assessment - visit a food distribution - Took part in NEFPAT+ interrater reliability testing	UE	August 2022	Assessment 1: 9/15/22
Long	Implement the Client Choice food pantry model	- Stock shelves - Place nudges & shelf talkers	UE	September or October 2022	
Long	Develop Nutrition Policy for preferred donations and purchases from foodbank	- Provide sample nutrition policies - Work with pantry coordinator to develop policies that make sense for OKO	UE	September 2022	**Developed:** July 5, 2022 **Implemented:**
Long	Recipe Tasting Event	- Coordinate with CWs to host EMS booths to promote recipes for items in that month's food box - Coordinate w/ Hort. to have a booth on growing spices/ herbs to use as salt-free seasonings	UE CWs	September 2022	
Sustainability Strategies (Ex. PDO, policy, role definition, ongoing funding, changes incorporated into normal operations, stakeholder support, monitoring system in place)		**Is there a plan to adopt this strategy?** **(**Options: No Plans to Adopt, Plans to Adopt, In Process/Partially Adopted, Fully in Place)	**Who will do?**	**Target Date**	**Actual Date**

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Key Terms:

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Appendix D:
Nutrition Pantry Program Resources

nutrition
pantry
program

About the Nutrition Pantry Program

The Nutrition Pantry Program (NPP) provides a process for implementing practical, client-centered strategies for a health-focused environment in all types of food distribution sites.

- Site visit, initial assessment, and implementation road-map
- Technical assistance and training
- Collaborative network of like-minded colleagues and organizations
- Bronze, Silver, and Gold level certification
- Access to capacity building resources
- Public recognition for certified pantries
- Access to best practices from around the country

Cultural & Dietary Accommodations

People of different backgrounds have access to food and information that fits their preferences and health needs.

Environment

Clients are warmly welcomed and healthy options are easy to access.

Community Connections

Pantries connect and collaborate with the community.

Nutrition Education

Clients, volunteers, and staff have access to nutrition and culinary education.

Inventory: Food Sourcing & Waste Reduction

Healthy foods are prioritized for distribution. Pantries support a variety of waste reduction efforts.

"I'm nourished. I'm seen. I'm heard. I matter."

Pantry Policies & Procedures

Policies and procedures are documented and align with a commitment to dignified, healthy distribution.

© Leah's Pantry—Nutrition Pantry Program | npp@leahspantry.org | Updated: 02/02/2021

Leah's PANTRY

nutrition pantry program

NPP Certification Overview

NPP combines the best practices of healthy pantry work grounded in trauma-informed principles and processes that promote a client and community-centered distribution. The Nutrition Pantry Program offers Silver or Gold certification to distributions that demonstrate evidence of implementation across six focus areas. .

1 Preparation

- ❑ Complete the Healthy Food Pantry Assessment (HFPAT)
- ❑ Complete Pantry Needs Assessment
- ❑ Collect client input

Benefits of Certification:

- ➔ Be a part of a growing network of certified pantries in California and around the country
- ➔ Recognition in the community and larger food security network
- ➔ Access to webinars, trainings, resources, grants and funding opportunities
- ➔ Leadership opportunities through presentations, trainings, conferences, and sharing with other pantries and food banks

2 Work Plan Creation & Implementation

Review the six focus areas:

Nutrition Education | *Cultural & Dietary Accom.* | *Inventory* | *Environmental* | *Pantry Policies & Procedures* | *Community Connections*

- ❑ Document existing work in each focus area
- ❑ Determine new work in focus areas based on pantry & client needs, survey results, pantry capacity, and client input
- ❑ Assign initial growth stage for each focus area

Seed—pantry has not yet begun to work in the area, but would like to

Sprout—pantry has started work, and may even have significant work, can provide examples, but still wants to do more

Bloom—pantry has evidence of activities in this area and they are currently satisfied with their efforts

- ❑ Implement work plan and document improvements

3 Certification

- ❑ Document final growth stage of each Focus Area on the Work Plan
- ❑ Complete post-HFPAT
- ❑ Silver or Gold Certification awarded based on final focus area stages
- ❑ Recognize pantry's accomplishments

GOLD: *5-6 blooms, no seeds*

SILVER: *3-4 blooms, ≤ 1 seed*

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Sample Timeline and Key Milestones

This chart outlines a typical timeline for a pantry participating in NPP, and the tasks that the implementer must complete throughout the process. Timing will differ depending on the amount of work a pantry elects to complete and the number of resources the pantry has to commit to the program.

1-3 Weeks	1-2 Months	2-8 Months	Ongoing
Planning	**Needs and Current Work Assessment**	**Implementation**	**Certification/Ongoing Maintenance**
➔ Hold planning meeting ➔ Schedule HFPAT walkthrough ➔ Schedule client needs assessment/current work meeting ➔ Set up regular check-ins	➔ Conduct HFPAT ➔ Complete client needs assessment worksheet ➔ Conduct client survey or other client feedback ➔ Document "current work" ➔ Identify which open client needs will be the focus of the program	➔ Select leading practice strategies for selected open needs ➔ Implement chosen leading practice strategies ➔ Assess certification requirements, if applicable	➔ Hold certification ceremony, if applicable ➔ Encourage pantry to participate in the NPP Work Group and provide support to other NPP pantries ➔ Conduct annual/bi-annual client needs reassessment
	Implementer to provide technical assistance to pantry *Document progress in workplan* *Participate in NPP Work Groups; be NPP Ambassador*		

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NPP for Implementers Process

This document outlines key steps and milestones completed throughout the NPP process. Note that resources available to support the pantry and implementer are in green, and worksheets to document work are in red.

Planning

STEP 1—Intro and Planning Meeting: Hold call or meeting with key pantry staff/volunteers to: ❑
Explain the NPP process and framework to the pantry ☀ **Resource: NPP Brochure; NPP One-Pager** ❑
Collect basic info from pantry (e.g., distribution model, populations served, distribution days/times, etc.) ☀ **Resource: Planning Call questions**

- ❑ Determine whether pantry will go through full certification (4 or more focus areas) or only want assistance in specific focus areas. Explain: they do not have to do certification and can make that decision later.
- ❑ Schedule a site visit to complete the HFPAT or a time when pantry staff will complete ☀ **Resource: Sample Email**
- ❑ Schedule a meeting to begin the Client Needs Assessment process
- ❑ Schedule regular check-ins with the pantry (e.g., monthly calls)
- ❑ Request that the pantry sends over any relevant documentation for the implementer to review (e.g., pantry policies/procedures, client registration/check-in forms, etc.)

Needs Assessment

STEP 2—Conduct Nutrition Environment Food Pantry Assessment Tool (NEFPAT+). Ideally conducted by the implementer, but pantry can complete if the implementer is unable to be onsite. ☀

STEP 3—Needs Assessment Planning: Ideally an in-person meeting between implementer and key pantry staff. Can conduct over the phone if needed. Implementer should work with the pantry to complete the following:

- ❑ Using the Client Needs Assessment Worksheet, discuss the pantry's process for obtaining client feedback. ☼ **Worksheet: Client Needs Assessment Worksheet**
- ❑ Using the Client Needs Assessment Worksheet, walk through relevant Client Needs/Satisfaction Statements and determine whether they are true for the pantry's clients or whether the pantry needs to collect feedback to make that determination ☼ **Worksheet: Client Needs Assessment Worksheet**
  - ❑ If additional client feedback is needed, decide how to collect it (e.g., client survey, focus group, review of data, etc.) and document decision on the worksheet ☀ **Resources: Sample Client Survey and Client Centered Feedback handout**
  - ❑ As part of this conversation, document the pantry's current work in each Focus Area ☼**Worksheet: NPP Work Plan**

❏ Summarize new plans to gather additional client feedback in Section B of the "Client Centered Feedback" area of the NPP Work Plan ☼ **Worksheet: NPP Work Plan**

STEP 4—Obtain Client Feedback:

❏ Based on results from Step 3, obtain client feedback to determine whether Client Needs marked as "Don't Know" are applicable to the pantry's clients. This process may take time, and may run parallel to Steps 5 through 8. ☀ **Resources: Sample Client Survey and Client Centered Feedback handout**

STEP 5—Finalize Client Needs Assessment and Documentation of Current Work:

❏ Once Step 4 is completed, reassess the Client Needs Assessment Worksheet to see if anything has changed. Determine which open needs the pantry will address through NPP. ☼ **Worksheet: Client Needs Assessment Worksheet**

❏ Document selected client needs on the work plan in the "Open Client Needs" section of each Focus Area ☼ **Worksheet: NPP Work Plan**

❏ Review the "Current Work" section of each Focus Area and ensure that all relevant current work performed by the pantry is documented ☼ **Worksheet: NPP Work Plan**

❏ Determine Initial seed, sprout, bloom categories for each Focus Area, given pantry capacity, existing work, and how well the pantry is meeting client needs. ☼ **Worksheet: NPP Work Plan**

STEP 6—Pick NPP Strategies/New Work:

❏ Pick appropriate leading practice strategies to implement at the pantry that address selected client needs ☀ **Resource: NPP Leading Practices One-Pagers**

❏ Populate Work Plan with specific steps to implement selected strategies in the "New Work" section of each Focus Area ☼ **Worksheet: NPP Work Plan**

Implementation

STEP 7—Implement Work Plan: Execute work plan. Meet regularly with the pantry throughout this time to check-in and to update progress on the work plan. Provide technical assistance as needed. ☀ **Resource: NPP Resource Library**

STEP 8—Hold Staff & Volunteer NPP Training: Although it is not required, many pantries will benefit from a training to introduce key aspects of NPP to their staff and volunteers. ☀ **Resource: Sample NPP Staff & Volunteer Training Agenda**

Certification and Ongoing Monitoring

STEP 9—Assess and Celebrate Accomplishments: Once the workplan is sufficiently completed, determine the maturity category (seed, sprout, or bloom) for each Focus Area. If applicable, determine certification level.

- ❏ Hold Certification or Graduation Celebration. Consider inviting volunteers, the board, donors, and local media.

STEP 10—Ongoing Monitoring: Establish a plan for ongoing monitoring and maintenance. Consider how to:

- ❏ Establish a process for collecting ongoing client feedback and documenting how new client needs are met
  - ☼ **Worksheet: NPP Follow-Up Client Needs Assessment**
- ❏ Support other pantries in NPP; serve as an ambassador to other pantries

Throughoutthe NPP Process: *Implementer to provide technical assistance as needed, populate work plan as information is gathered, and hold regular check-ins with the pantry.*