

Valley
United Way



VALLEY HUNGER STUDY

A report on issues of hunger and access to food in Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton



PREPARED BY:
COMMUNITY RESULTS CENTER

United Way
of Connecticut



The Community Results Center (CRC) is a specialized department of United Way of Connecticut that seeks to improve community life by providing research and analysis that informs local planning, measures community change, and increases citizen decision-making capacity.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Results Center at United Way of Connecticut conducted an exploratory research study for the Valley Council Food Security Task Force and Valley United Way to gain a better understanding of hunger and access to food in the Valley towns of Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton. The results of this multi-phase research project—which included online surveys of Valley food pantries, phone interviews and a focus group with stakeholder in the food system, and brief surveys of food pantry users—are summarized below.

Methodology

Data for this study was collected from organizations that provide food in the Valley as well as from people who use Valley food pantries. The provider data was collected in two phases, with the first phase being an online survey and the second phase being a phone interview or a focus group discussion. Representatives from the following organizations participated in the provider research:

- Seymour Oxford Food Bank
- St. Vincent De Paul
- Christ Episcopal Church
- The Salvation Army
- ACT Spooner House
- The Umbrella/BH Care Center
- Parent Child Resource Center
- Connecticut Food Bank
- Ansonia Public Schools
- Derby Public Schools
- Oxford Public Schools
- Seymour Public Schools
- Shelton Public Schools

The data on food pantry users was collected through a convenience sample. Volunteer interviewers visited each pantry at least once during its regular hours of operation and invited every pantry user to participate in the survey. As an incentive to participate, respondents at each pantry were entered into a drawing for a \$25 gift card to Stop and Shop. Of all pantry users invited to take the survey, 96% opted to participate.

Review of Research and Indicators of Need in the Valley

The report begins with a review of current research on hunger and food security, and continues with a summary of indicators of need for the Valley as a whole. This information provides context for the findings and recommendations in the report.

Research Review

The *Hunger in America 2014: The Face of Hunger in Connecticut* report by Feeding America found that 21% of households in the state that visit food pantries have no income, and that 74% of households that visit pantries subsist at or below the federal poverty level. More than half (57%) who visit pantries also receive SNAP benefits.

The *2012 Community Food Security in Connecticut* study assesses food security in Connecticut at the municipal level, and ranks each on three measures: Population At-Risk; Food Retail; and Food Assistance. For Population At-Risk, Ansonia and Derby are in the bottom one-third of all municipalities in the state, and are in the top one-third for access to Food Retail and Food Assistance.

Indicators of Need

The Valley is a diverse region, with its five towns home to 100,776 residents comprising 38,327 households. Altogether, 7.7% of Valley residents live at or below the federal poverty level (FPL) and 17.7% of residents live at or below 200% of the FPL. The Connecticut ALICE Report, which measures need at the household level in relation to a basic cost of living threshold, found that 30% of all Valley households live at or below the ALICE threshold. 21% of Valley households receive SNAP benefits and 30% of students in Valley school districts are eligible for free or reduced price lunch. The average unemployment rate in the Valley is 7.6%.

In calendar years 2010 through 2013, food was consistently one of the top ten reasons for residents in Valley towns to call 2-1-1, with an average of 455 requests for food assistance per year.

Valley Food Pantry Users

Volunteer interviewers administered surveys to food pantry users at all Valley area food pantries in late September and early October 2014, completing a total of 129 surveys with local pantry users.

- 85% have at least 1 unemployed person in their household.
- 68% have at least 1 person in their household receiving SNAP.
- 12% have at least 1 person in their household receiving WIC.
- 67% have at least 1 person in their household receiving HUSKY Health Coverage.

Pantry users report that the food they receive lasts an average of 12 days, though for some (40%) it lasts less than one week and for others (19%) it can last for more than 2 weeks. The vast majority of respondents (87%) say that they only receive food from any pantry one time per month.

Limited availability of food (48%) and a limited selection of healthy food options (47%) are the top barriers that pantry users in the Valley encounter usually or sometimes. 43% of pantry users in the Valley say that transportation is usually or sometimes a barrier, but it is important to note that people for whom transportation is a significant barrier were not at the pantry in order to participate.

Valley Food Providers

The food provider research was conducted in two phases, the first of which was an online survey of the food pantries in the Valley and the second involving interviews and a focus group discussion to gain additional insights from key providers. The top-line findings are summarized below.

- All of the food pantries rely on volunteers for help with their day to day operations, and a majority of them accept court-appointed volunteers and high school student volunteers.
- Valley pantries report that, on average 36% of their food comes from food drives, 15% from the Connecticut Food Bank, 12% from the Valley United Way CVC.
- Cereal, Meats, Peanut Butter, Canned tuna/salmon/sardines are on the list of top 5 needs for at least 50% of the pantries in the Valley.
- Need and demand for food at Valley pantries is highest and food stock is lowest in the months of February, June, July, August, and September.
- Only three Valley pantries calculate a cost per meal, with one pantry indicating that the cost is 47 cents, another \$3 and the third \$4 per meal.
- Valley food pantries serve 1,960 individuals per month, with 71% of those individuals representing multi-person households.

Food System Weaknesses

In the interviews and the focus group, participants discussed strengths and weaknesses of the food system in the Valley, but due to the nature of the research project and its purpose to improve the overall food system, the discussions were weighted more heavily toward areas of weakness, which are summarized below.

- **Communication** is an area in need of improvement that was most often cited among participants, all of which acknowledge the Task Force as a way of addressing the concern.
- **Collaboration** is a challenge for the Valley food system because the pantries all operate independently and devote all of their resources to providing food. However, there is a willingness to collaborate within the Valley system, and further discussion of collaboration opportunities at Valley Council Food Security Task Force meetings will facilitate this.
- **Awareness and Outreach** is an area of weakness in the Valley food system and many participants expressed that it is important to raise awareness of the resources available in order to reduce the stigma associated with receiving help and also to alert community members to the needs of local pantries.
- **Transportation** is another weakness of the Valley food system, with many participants indicating that they know of people who need help but are unable to find transportation to receive it.

Potential Collaborations

Providers who participated in the online survey were asked to evaluate four proposals for potential collaboration within the Valley food system. After having read and rated each proposal, they ranked all four in order of their preference, with a *mobile food pantry* being ranked first and a *system or database of exchanged information* being ranked second.

Promising Practices and Recommendations

The report concludes with a review of research on existing practices, and recommendations for the Valley Council Food Security Task Force to consider for the future of the food system in the Valley. The recommendations are summarized below.

1. Adopt a common method of measuring food – Using a common measure of food in the Valley will facilitate collaboration and simplify the process of reporting the collective impact of the Valley food system. The final measure should be discussed and determined by the members of the Task Force, but a starting point for discussion should be to measure food in pounds, and adopt the standard conversion of 1.2 pounds = 1 meal used by the Connecticut Food Bank.
2. Explore feasibility of additional sites for the Connecticut Food Bank Mobile Pantry – The top ranked collaboration proposal is to work together on a mobile food pantry proposal in the Valley, and one way to approach that is to work with the Connecticut Food Bank to identify and support one or more additional sites for their mobile distribution in Valley towns.
3. Develop a Food Action Plan for the Valley – For the purpose of long-term planning, the Valley Council Food Security Task Force should consider setting goals and developing a Food Action Plan around those goals with concrete strategies that can be used to increase food security throughout the Valley.

OVERVIEW

The Valley Council Food Security Task Force and Valley United Way first convened in January 2014 to better understand issues of hunger and access to food in the Valley towns of Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton. To aid in their ongoing work, the task force sought to conduct an exploratory study of hunger and food security in the Valley. Toward that end, the Community Results Center at United Way of Connecticut carried out a multi-phase research project that included surveying food pantry users in the Valley, interviewing representatives from food pantries in the Valley, conducting a focus group with school district food service providers, and distributing an online survey of food pantries. Existing research related to food security and hunger issues was reviewed, and was used as a basis for identifying promising practices in key areas of interest for the Valley Council Food Security Task Force.

The user surveys were administered in order to gather top-level data from people who visit food pantries in the Valley, such as their household size and any barriers that make it more challenging for them to access food services. The surveys, interviews and focus group with food service providers in the Valley were used to help identify the existing capacity, potential gaps or overlaps in service, and opportunities for future collaboration. All of the research activities were guided by the following key research questions:

- What is the scope of need for food services in the Valley?
- What is the existing capacity to provide food services in the Valley?
- Where are there gaps or overlaps in food services provided in the Valley?
- How might existing resources be allocated or coordinated more effectively?

The report begins with a description of the methodology used for the primary data collection phases of this project. Then it continues with a review of current research and summary of need in the Valley, including an overview of 2-1-1 call data for the five-town region from calendar years 2010 through 2013. This is followed by a summary of the findings from the food pantry user surveys. Next is a presentation of the provider research findings, with results from both the online survey and the interviews and focus group. The report then discusses potential ideas for future collaboration and promising practices identified in key areas of interest to the Valley Council Food Security Task Force.

In the appendices to this report are the annotated provider survey, the annotated user survey, a summary of the focus groups and interviews, profiles of need for each of the five towns in the Valley, and a guide to accessing food resources in the Valley.

METHODOLOGY

The Community Results Center (CRC) met with the Valley Council Food Security Task Force and key stakeholders to identify the focus and direction of the research project and to prioritize the collection of data to inform this exploratory report on food security and hunger in the Valley. Data was collected from food providers in two phases, and a brief, high-level survey was developed to gain key insights from food pantry users.

The primary data collected from food providers in this research was gathered through self-administered online surveys, a guided focus group discussion, and a series of one-on-one telephone interviews. The data collected on users of food pantries in the Valley was collected through volunteer-administered paper surveys.

A listing of the food pantries and other organizations that participated in this project, and the phase(s) in which they participated is below. Decisions about which phases each provider would participate in were guided by limitations on resources and time allotted for this research project, in an effort to gather as much data from as many sources as possible.

Table 1. Participating Providers		
Organization	Phase 1 Online Survey	Phase 2 Interview or Focus Group
Seymour Oxford Food Bank	<i>Completed Survey</i>	<i>Phone Interview</i>
St. Vincent De Paul	<i>Completed Survey</i>	<i>Phone Interview</i>
Christ Episcopal Church	<i>Completed Survey</i>	<i>Phone Interview</i>
The Salvation Army	<i>Completed Survey</i>	<i>Phone Interview</i>
ACT Spooner House	<i>Completed Survey</i>	<i>Phone Interview</i>
The Umbrella/BH Care	<i>Completed Survey</i>	<i>Phone Interview</i>
Parent Child Resource Center	<i>Completed Survey</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Shelton Public Schools*	<i>Completed Survey</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Ansonia Public Schools	<i>n/a</i>	<i>Focus Group</i>
Derby Public Schools	<i>n/a</i>	<i>Focus Group</i>
Oxford Public Schools	<i>n/a</i>	<i>Focus Group</i>
Seymour Public Schools	<i>n/a</i>	<i>Focus Group</i>
Connecticut Food Bank	<i>n/a</i>	<i>Phone Interview</i>

*Shelton High School operates a food pantry that is open to families of any current Shelton Public School student.

Both the provider data and user data gathered in the surveys was tabulated and descriptive statistics are used to summarize the findings from those surveys in this report. In the case of the provider

surveys, some questions were included for the express purpose of facilitating the compilation of a directory of food resources that conveys the availability of food at each pantry and also the resource and volunteer needs of each pantry.

The method used to identify the participants for the user study was a convenience sample. Volunteer interviewers visited each pantry at least once during its hours of food distribution and approached every food pantry user with an invitation to participate in a brief survey. As an incentive for participation, respondents at each pantry were entered into a drawing for a \$25 gift card to Stop and Shop. 96% of the pantry users opted to participate.

REVIEW OF CURRENT RESEARCH

Recent research reports about food security issues in Connecticut were reviewed and are summarized below. These summaries highlight key facts that lend context to the exploratory research in this study of hunger in the Valley.

September 2014 – Hunger in America 2014: The Face of Hunger in Connecticut

The Hunger in America study is a comprehensive study of hunger in the U.S. that documents how Feeding America affiliated food banks and partner agencies support increasing access to food. This report provides an overview of food security issues from the provider and user perspectives in the six counties served by the Connecticut Food Bank in Connecticut.

- Just over 1-in-5 households (21%) that receive food from pantries have no income
- Nearly 3 out of every 4 households (74%) receiving food from pantries have incomes falling at or below the federal poverty level
- 73% of households visiting food pantries report making significant spending trade-offs between food and other necessities
- 57% of households who visit pantries receive SNAP benefits

December 2012 – 2012 Community Food Security in Connecticut

This study focuses on food security at the town level, and ranks each town on three key measures: Population At-Risk, Food Retail, and Food Assistance. The goal of the study and its rankings is to provide clear, accessible results that can be used locally by people with a stake in increasing food security.

- The Population At-Risk rankings indicate the likelihood that a resident in the town is to be food insecure. A ranking of 1 indicates the lowest risk, and a ranking of 169 the highest.
- The Food Retail rankings assess the geographic proximity of food retailers relative to other towns. A ranking of 1 indicates the most proximity and a ranking of 169 indicates the least.
- The Food Assistance rankings account for the participation of eligible residents in food assistance programs. A ranking of 1 indicates that town residents are most able to participate, and a ranking of 169 indicates the least.

TABLE 2. 2012 Community Food Security in Connecticut Rankings			
	Population At-Risk <i>(rank out of 169)</i>	Food Retail <i>(rank out of 169)</i>	Food Assistance <i>(rank out of 169)</i>
Ansonia	156	21	8
Derby	153	16	31
Oxford	35	107	159
Seymour	111	59	61
Shelton	99	58	50

SUMMARY OF NEED IN THE VALLEY

In order to add perspective and context to the discussion of food security and hunger issues in the Valley, below is a summary of several indicators of need in the Valley. The Valley is diverse and this summary of need applies to the region as a whole. Profiles of need by town are in APPENDIX E. These indicators are organized into categories of housing, food assistance, income, and transportation. Included among these indicators is a new classification of people in need: ALICE.

ALICE is a United Way acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, and is used as a name for the often-overlooked population of people who work and earn incomes above the Federal Poverty Level but less than a basic cost of living threshold. The Connecticut ALICE Report was released in November 2014, and shines a light on the struggles faced by people who are important to our communities and are not always able to make ends meet, let alone get ahead.

Households in Need

- Combined, the five Valley towns of Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton are home to 100,776 residents comprising 38,327 households.
- 7.7% of all residents (7,710) in the Valley live at or below 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL) and nearly 10,000 additional residents live above the FPL and below 200% of the FPL – altogether, 17.1% of Valley residents live below 200% FPL (17,009).
- According to the Connecticut ALICE Report¹, which measures need at the household level, 8% of all households in the Valley live at or below the FPL, with an additional 22% identified as ALICE households. 3-in-10 (30%) Valley households live below the ALICE threshold.

Food Assistance

- Almost 3-in-10 students in the Valley are eligible for free or reduced meals at school, with 5.9% (837) of all Valley students eligible for reduced price lunch and 23.8% (3,368) eligible for free lunch.
- 8,039 households in the Valley receive SNAP benefits, which is 21% of all households in the region.
- On average, 950 households in the Valley receive WIC benefits, which is approximately 2.5% of all Valley households.

Income

- Median family income in the Valley is \$92,350, although it ranges from \$63,967 in Derby to \$118,221 in Oxford.

¹ Learn more and read the full Connecticut ALICE Report at <http://alice.ctunitedway.org>

Sources: 2012 American Community Survey (5 yr estimates), CT Department of Labor (2013), CT Voices for Children (2012), LegalAssistance Resource Center of Connecticut (2014), United Way ALICE Report.

- On average, 7.6% of residents in the Valley were unemployed in 2013, ranging from 6% in Oxford to 9.3% in Ansonia.
- For the 2012 tax year, 4,451 Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC) were claimed, representing nearly 1-in-10 of all tax returns filed in the region.

2-1-1 Call Statistics

United Way 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember number that connects people who want to give help or get help with a full range of health and human services in their community. The service is provided at no cost to users, and can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by dialing 2-1-1 or visiting 211ct.org. Each year, 2-1-1 handles more than 500,000 requests for assistance, and a review of the call statistics provides a snapshot of the top needs at the time.

The top service requests in the Valley region remained fairly stable over the course of the past 4 calendar years, with requests for help connecting to Public Assistance Programs, finding Housing/Shelter, help with Utilities/Heat, and Financial Assistance consistently in the top four.

TABLE 3. Top 2-1-1 Service Requests in the Valley Region, 2010 through 2013				
Year	2013	2012	2011	2010
Total # of Requests	10,480	10,923	9,282	8,870
Public Assistance Programs	2,121	1,945	748	785
Housing/Shelter	1,043	1,170	943	935
Utilities/Heat	959	964	1,045	1,018
Financial Assistance	727	690	624	638
Outpatient Mental Health Care	658	669	590	597
Information Services	569	556	638	860
Legal Services	491	457	422	459
Food	464	563	399	394
<i>Food Pantries</i>	400	501	322	312
<i>Other Food Requests</i>	64	62	77	82
Health Supportive Services	363	340	349	260
Substance Abuse Services	280	295	314	329

Requests for assistance with Food are somewhat lower on the list but have consistently been in the top ten for the past four calendar years. Requests for food pantries make up the vast majority of Food requests in each year, with the remainder split among requests for soup kitchens, home delivered meals, summer food programs, school meals, and formula or baby food.

VALLEY FOOD PANTRY USERS

In late September and early October 2014, volunteer interviewers visited the Seymour Oxford Food Bank in Seymour, Spooner House in Shelton, St. Vincent De Paul in Derby, Salvation Army in Ansonia, Christ Episcopal in Ansonia, and the Connecticut Food Bank Mobile Pantry in Derby to administer surveys to food pantry users at each location. Altogether, 134 food pantry users were approached and invited to take the survey, with 96% agreeing to participate (129 respondents).

Just over 1-in-4 respondents (28%) live in a single-person household, and exactly half of all respondents (50%) live in a household with at least one child. The average household size for all respondents to this survey is 2.95 (1.85 adults on average and 1.1 children on average).

TABLE 4. Conditions of Need Applying to Self and Others in Household				
	Anyone in Household (n=129)	Self (n=129)	Self and Others (n=129)	Others* (n=93)
Unemployed	85%	82%	29%	45%
Food Stamps/SNAP	68%	63%	17%	30%
WIC Benefits	12%	7%	2%	8%
HUSKY Health Coverage	67%	59%	33%	57%

**Among households with more than 1 person*

A majority of respondents have at least one person in their household who is unemployed, with 82% of all respondents indicating that they themselves are unemployed and 45% indicating that at least one other person in their household is unemployed. 29% of respondents have at least 2 unemployed household members.

More than two-thirds of all respondents live in a household where at least one member receives Food Stamps/SNAP benefits (68%), suggesting that the benefits do not meet the food needs of everyone in the household.

When asked to estimate how long the food they receive from a pantry usually lasts, respondents say that on average the food they receive lasts them for about 12 days. 19% of respondents say that it lasts more than 2 weeks, and 40% say it lasts 7 days or less. The vast majority of respondents (87%) say that they get food from pantries only one time per month, with 13% indicating that they get food from pantries more often. Four respondents declined to answer these questions, and 6 respondents who were first time users were not asked these questions.

Barriers to Accessing Food

All respondents were asked about how often they encounter the following barriers to accessing food resources in the Valley, with the majority of respondents indicating for each barrier that it is rarely/never a problem for them. Given that the sample of respondents to the user survey is comprised of people who have made it to the pantry and received food, this may indicate that the incidence of each barrier is underrepresented in the results of this survey. It is, however, still informative for assessing the barriers that pantry users encounter.

TABLE 5. Frequency of Barriers to Accessing Food Services					
	Usually/ Sometimes	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	Rarely/ Never	N/A
Not enough food available at pantry	48%	17%	31%	47%	5%
Not enough healthy food available	47%	18%	29%	49%	5%
Transportation to food pantry	43%	23%	20%	57%	0%
Transporting food received	34%	20%	14%	65%	1%
Special dietary/health needs	33%	18%	15%	65%	2%
Food pantry hours of operation	29%	14%	16%	67%	3%
Storing food received	14%	9%	5%	85%	1%

The top two most frequent barriers pertain to the availability of food at the pantry, with 48% indicating that the pantry usually or sometimes does not have enough food available, and 47% indicating that the pantry usually or sometimes does not have enough healthy food available. In both cases, the majority of those who say that either of these items is a barrier indicate that it only occurs sometimes, however 17% and 18% respectively say that it is usually the case.

Transportation to the pantry is usually or sometimes a barrier for just over 2-in-5 respondents, with 57% reporting that it is rarely/never an issue. Please note however, that the people for whom transportation is a frequent barrier were the least likely to have been present and able to participate in this survey.

The food pantry hours of operation is usually or sometimes a barrier for nearly 3-in-10 respondents (29%). However, as with the transportation barrier, the people for whom the pantry's hours of operation presents a frequent barrier were the least likely to have been present and able to take this survey.

Pantry Users Perspective

The volunteer interviewers who administered the surveys to food pantry users heard from a wide variety of people who rely on food pantries. Below are some brief summaries of what the volunteer interviewers learned from speaking to food pantry users, which are illustrative of the challenges that these community members face.

- A mother who recently lost SNAP eligibility because her children's father was released from jail and is back living with them. He is not working and her part time work is unpredictable, so she relies on the food from the pantry to help feed her two children, herself and her partner. When describing her situation, she said, "We make it work. It's not enough food for my kids- my son is now 12 and eats everything, but I rely on free school lunch and tell them this food is for dinner only. I don't know what I'm going to do without the food stamps, but I am not going to put their dad on the street. He is trying to get his act together now that he is out. I wish this was more than once a month."
- A woman with Celiac Disease who has a highly restricted diet said that she visits a local food pantry for her husband's food and comes to the mobile food pantry for fresher selections since can't eat the canned foods. Her husband receives a small unemployment check and she is not currently working. She says that they can barely afford to keep the lights on and rely on the local food pantry and mobile food pantry to make it through the month. She wishes that the food truck would come more than once a month.
- An older couple in which the wife is legally blind, and the husband is her caretaker recently took in their son, who also has children and is unable to find work. The family shares a pickup truck as their only mode of transportation, and they rely on mom's disability benefits as their only source of income. Their SNAP benefits are not enough to cover the cost of food so they rely on the food pantry to help them get by
- One woman claimed to be picking up food for a client, but over the course of the interview confessed that she was getting food for herself and her family. She described how hard it is to cover just the cost of basic living expenses. She is a single mom with two children and is overwhelmed by the demands of her financial obligations and needs the extra help from food pantries.
- Another single mother with two children, receiving disability, Section 8, cash assistance, and SNAP benefits still struggles to cover the cost of groceries for the month. She has Diabetes and is on a restricted diet, and her request to the state for additional SNAP benefits to help her afford the food she needs for her restricted diet was denied. She counts on food pantries to help her family's food needs.
- A woman at one of the pantries told her interviewers that she "was hoping that the three of you well-dressed women were holding a job fair. I really appreciate the food I receive but a

job would be even better. I lost my job a year ago and have been struggling to survive ever since. I'm not lazy and I'm willing to work."

- A person with a family of five said that they receive food stamps and visit the food pantries, but it still isn't enough. Though grateful for the assistance, they say that some "of the items are difficult to use when creating a meal--sometimes I will get pasta but no sauce, meat or anything that I know how to pair with it. I'm at a loss for how to feed my family."
- One woman at the mobile food pantry said, "Please let the elderly go first. They are old and the food runs out by the time they get to the front of the line. My family really needs it but they need it more. The system here needs to change."

These brief stories provide a glimpse into the struggles faced by food pantry users and the critical role that the Valley food pantries play in helping them get through each month. Many in the Valley rely on their local food pantry to fill in gaps when other programs or benefits change, or in the case of an emergency that limits their ability to get the food they need. Improvements to the food system in the Valley—including collaboration amongst the pantries—are likely to have a strong positive impact on meeting the food security needs of more Valley families.

VALLEY FOOD PROVIDERS

The provider research for this project was conducted in two phases. The first phase was an online survey that was completed by key contacts at eight food pantries in the Valley, and the second phase involved conducting a focus group and phone interviews with food providers in the Valley to gain additional insight from the largest pantries and other key provider contacts.

A listing of the food provider organizations that participated in this project, and the phase(s) in which they participated can be found in the Methodology section of this report. Decisions about which phases each provider would participate in were guided by limitations on resources and time allotted for this research project, in an effort to gather as much data from as many sources as possible.

What follows is a summary of the results from the online survey (Phase 1), with insights from the focus group and interviews (Phase 2) included where appropriate. Altogether, the provider research includes insights from the eight food pantries that serve the Valley, the school district food service programs, and the Connecticut Food Bank. Unless otherwise noted, the quantitative results in this section are from the online survey phase of the research.

Food Provider Background

All of the providers offer food to members of the community in need, with many indicating that they also provide other resources such as toiletries, baby supplies, clothing, and winter coats. On average, these pantries devoted 50% of their annual staff and volunteer hours to food services in the past year, and an average of more than a third of their annual budget (35%) across all organizations was allocated to providing food or food services to people in need. Five of the pantries devoted more than 50% of their hours to food services, and three devoted more than half of their annual budget to food services. Compared to three years ago, most pantries say that these allocations of time and budget are higher (75%) or about the same (25%).

Although the providers all share a common role of giving food to people in need, many offer additional services or have a unique approach to fulfilling their role in the overall food system:

- The Umbrella primarily provides food and meals for families in its shelter.
- St. Vincent De Paul is in the process of expanding, and its food pantry is staffed primarily by volunteers and funded by donations as well as proceeds from their thrift shop.
- The Samela Food Bank at Christ Episcopal Church allows visitors to select their own food, and recently started “Debbie’s Closet” as a program to receive and distribute donations of household items for families in need.
- The Salvation Army also allows visitors to choose their own food, and is set up somewhat like a grocery store for food selection.

- The Seymour Oxford Food Bank is entirely volunteer run, and aims to give at least 7 days' worth of food to resident families in need.
- Spooner House is the largest pantry in the Valley in terms of the number of families and amount of food it offers, and is primarily volunteer-run.
- School districts who participated describe their role as a critical component of the school's primary mission to educate children, and although the specifics vary from district to district, no students have to go without food during the school day for lack of ability to pay. Schools also serve as the service site for summer meal programs in eligible communities.
- The Connecticut Food Bank has a mission to provide nutritious food to people in need, and has a network of 700 member programs in the state—including the pantries in the Valley area. It also operates a mobile food pantry that visits Derby once per month to provide food.

Volunteer Assistance

Most food pantries operate with significant help from volunteers. At the time of the survey, all of the participating pantries indicated that they accept volunteers. Among those that accept volunteers, three of the pantries require volunteers to be aged 18 or older, and the remaining four will accept volunteers of all ages. Five of the pantries accept court-appointed volunteers and six of the pantries accept high school volunteers.

Volunteers are an important resource for many pantries. In the Valley, most pantries rely on volunteers to help package food for distribution days, confirm the quality and freshness of food that is in stock, and to keep the pantry running smoothly.

What Food is Typically in Stock?

Respondents marked items on a long list of food items that are typically in food pantries to indicate the items that they usually have in stock. The word cloud in Figure 1 includes the 40 items that the respondents indicated are usually in stock at their food pantries. The items that are in the largest size type are available at the largest number of pantries, and the items in the smallest size type are available at the smallest number of pantries.

Items that were marked as typically available by all respondents are Canned Fruit, Jelly, Macaroni and Cheese, Pasta, Peanut Butter, and Vegetables.

FIGURE 1. Food Items Typically in Stock at Valley Food Pantries

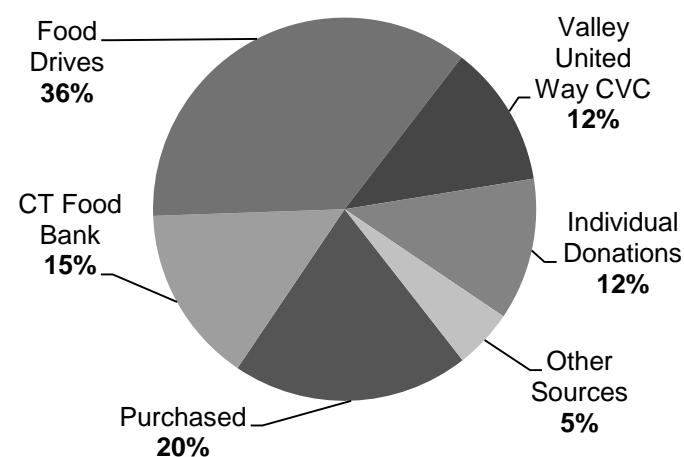


Additionally, all respondents indicated whether they could accommodate special requests at least some of the time for personal care items (100%), holiday food (88%), household items (88%), food for dietary restrictions (75%) and ethnic/cultural food items (63%).

Where Does the Food Come From?

Respondents were asked to indicate what percentage of the food at their pantry came from each of the resources listed. The biggest single source of food is from food drives, with respondents indicating that an average of 36 percent of their food comes from food drives organized by outside groups (31%) or by the pantry itself (5%). An average of 20% of the food at each pantry is purchased using funds allocated for that purpose and 15% comes from the Connecticut Food Bank on average. Donations from the Valley United Way Corporate Volunteer Council account for an average of 12% of the food in Valley pantries, as do individual donations from community members (8%) and employees/members of the organization (4%).

FIGURE 2. Sources of Food



Top 5 Needs

Respondents were presented with the same list of food pantry items and asked to select the items that they would consider to be in their list of top 5 items needed. Generally, there is a good amount of variation among the top 5 lists provided by each respondent, with no particular item being listed for more than half of the organizations. The top 5 needs for each of the 8 participating pantries can be found with their entry in Food When You Need It: A Guide to Accessing Food in the Valley (Appendix D). Below in Table 6 are the items that were selected in the top 5 for any of the participating pantries, ranked in order of the number of pantries that selected the item as a top 5 need.

TABLE 6. Top 5 Food Needs			
Cereal (regular size boxes/bags)	50%	Fresh produce	13%
Meats (canned chicken, ham, SPAM)	50%	Fruit (canned)	13%
Peanut Butter	50%	Hamburger Helper/Tuna Helper	13%
Tuna/salmon/sardines (canned)	50%	Hot Cereal	13%
Frozen meats	38%	Macaroni and Cheese	13%
Beef stew	25%	Pasta (dry)	13%
Spaghetti sauce	25%	Powdered Milk	13%
Vegetables	25%	Rice (white, brown, mixed)	13%
Coffee	13%	Snacks (fruit snacks, granola bars)	13%
Cooking oil	13%	Soups	13%
Crackers	13%	Tea	13%
Dairy (fresh milk, cheese)	13%		

Need and Demand for Food Throughout the Year

Although food security and hunger are year-round issues, many pantries experience peaks and lulls in their food stock and in the demand for their food throughout the year. Providers who responded to this survey were asked to indicate for each month of the year whether the need or demand for food from their pantry was low, average, or high. Notably, none of the respondents selected “low” for any month of the year. Respondents were also asked to indicate for each month whether their supply of food in stock was a surplus, fully stocked, or not enough. Only in November and December did any pantries indicate that they had a surplus of food.

Table 7. Months When Majority of Valley Pantries Report Low Food Supply and High Food Demand												
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Majority “Not Enough Food”		71%	57%			57%	50%	67%	71%			
Majority “High Need/Demand”		57%		57%		57%	57%	57%	57%	71%	71%	71%
Majority Both		X				X	X	X	X			

February, March, June, July, August, and September are the months where at least half of the pantries indicated that the amount of food typically available was not enough. February, April, June, July, August, September, October, November, and December are the months where at least half of

the pantries indicated that the need or demand for food from their organization was high. This suggests that the post-holidays wintertime (February) and summer (June through September) are the times of the year when need and demand for food is at its highest and the stock at food pantries in the Valley is at its lowest (Table 7).

Tracking Food and Costs

As part of the online survey, pantries were asked whether they calculate a cost per meal for the that they provide. Of the 8 pantries that responded, only 3 calculate a cost per meal for the food that they provide—one provided the cost as 47 cents per meal, another reported the cost as \$4 per meal and the third reported a cost of \$3 per meal.

Providers were also asked how they quantify the amounts of food that they provide, with only one organization reporting that they do not track the information. There does not appear to be consensus among the providers in the Valley about how to quantify the food that they provide, with some using bags of food as a measurement, others using days' worth of food, and some using the number of meals.


$$1 \text{ meal} = 1.2 \text{ pounds of food}$$

Source: Connecticut Food Bank

The Connecticut Food Bank, which supplies food to pantries throughout the Valley, uses pounds of food as its standard measure, calculating the number of meals by multiplying the pounds by 1.2. Using this conversion factor, the amount of food provided to an individual by some pantries can be roughly approximated.

Seymour Oxford Food Bank and Christ Episcopal Church both indicated that they typically provides 7 days' worth of food to an individual in a single visit. Assuming 3 meals per day and 1.2 pounds per meal, we can estimate that these pantries provide approximately 21 meals/25.2 pounds worth of food to an individual per visit. Salvation Army provides 3 days' worth of food, which is approximately 9 meals/10.8 pounds worth of food per visit. Spooner House provides 21 meals, which is approximately 7 days' and 25.2 pounds worth of food.

Shelton High Food Bank and St. Vincent De Paul measure the food that they distribute in terms of the number of bags, which cannot be converted into an approximate number of meals, pounds, or days' worth of food without knowing more about the bags used.

How Many and How Often

Providers were asked to estimate how many individuals they provide food to in a typical month, and then to estimate how many of those individuals represent multi-person households and how many represent single person households. Altogether, food providers in the Valley serve almost 2,000 individuals in a month (1,960) with the majority of those individuals (71%) multi-person households.

All of the respondents are in agreement in that they base the amount of food provided to each visitor on the number of people who live in the household. Multi-person households receive more food than single-person households. Where the providers differ is on how many times a household can receive food from their organization in a month. One provider (The Umbrella) does not track the number of times a person visits their pantry, and three providers (Shelton High Food Bank, Christ Episcopal Church, and the Parent Child Resource Center) do not have a limit on the number of times a person can visit. The remaining providers (Seymour Oxford Food Bank, St. Vincent De Paul, Salvation Army, and Spooner House) all set a limit of one visit per month.

Helping When Over Capacity

Due to fluctuations in demand and the unpredictable nature of a primarily donated food supply, pantries sometimes face the challenge of being asked for help at a time when they are not able to directly provide it. When asked what they would do if someone came to their pantry in need of food assistance that they were unable to provide, all of the respondents indicated that they would do at least some additional outreach to find help for the person in need. 88% would provide the person with information about other organizations in the Valley, half (50%) would tell the person about 2-1-1, and 25% would help reach out to other local organizations directly.

As for which Valley organizations are top-of-mind, the respondents listed Salvation Army, St. Vincent De Paul, and Spooner House most often. However, the Connecticut Food Bank, TEAM, Christ Episcopal Church, Seymour Oxford Food Bank, and other local religious organizations were all mentioned as resources that the pantries would help people connect with when they are over capacity.

Food Resources in the Valley

The providers who participated in the focus group (school districts) and the telephone interviews (food pantries) were asked to name the food resources that they are aware of in Valley towns. The resources listed collectively by all participants closely mirrors the list of organizations that providers would reach out to if they were over capacity or unable to provide assistance, but it also includes some additional resources that are part of the overall food system. Salvation Army, Spooner House, and St. Vincent De Paul were the Valley-area pantries mentioned most often as food resources. Shelters, local churches, and meal programs were also mentioned, but the only other specifically

named programs were Master's Table (for meals), the Summer Food Program (for student meals), and the Red Cross (for emergency food needs).

Strengths in the Food System

In both the focus group and the interviews with Valley food pantries, participants were asked about what they identify as the particular strengths of the food system in the Valley. In all cases, the discussion of strengths was short, which is not to say that there are few strengths in the system, but is more likely because the context of the interviews and focus group is one of improving the food system and identifying ways to help more people in the Valley. The school districts cited the availability of the SNAP program as well as the existing food pantries in the Valley as strengths of the system in their focus group discussion. In their interviews, participants from the food pantries cited the generosity of the community and its willingness to come together as a significant strength, as well as the focus on providing food to friends and neighbors in need that all of the Valley pantries share.

Although limited communication was an often cited weakness of the system (discussed later), it should be noted here that all participants see the Valley Council Food Security Task Force as a significant strength of the Valley system – particularly the way in which it has brought all of the key stakeholders together to discuss hunger issues in the Valley. The ongoing discussions, meetings, and evolution of the task force are likely to reinforce its role as a critical connection within the system.

Weaknesses in the Food System

The providers who participated in the focus group and the interviews shared a variety of weaknesses or areas for improvement for the Valley food system, as well as ideas for how they might improve the system. A detailed summary of the responses can be found in APPENDIX C, and a brief overview is below:

- **Communication** – Although all participating providers acknowledge that the Valley Council Food Security Task Force has enabled and fostered communication amongst key stakeholders in the Valley food system, many still cited communication as an area in need of improvement. Most pantries focus on doing what they can with what they have rather than expend limited time, resources, and volunteer labor on communicating with others—yet they recognize the value of being able to communicate and share information where applicable and appropriate. Two of the proposed collaboration ideas (discussed in the next subsection) are to create a food network in the Valley or to develop a database for exchanged information, both of which have the potential to increase communication within the system.

- **Collaboration** – This is primarily a challenge due to the fact that pantries use a variety of different criteria for eligibility, to record the number of meals served, cost per meal, and other key statistics that could make it easier for providers to work together. Most acknowledge that it may not make sense or be feasible to impose standards across independent pantries, but are interested in entertaining proposals for collaboration that can make it easier to demonstrate the collective impact (and need) within the Valley system, and that the key to success with any such proposals is to have all of the stakeholders involved in their creation.
- **Awareness and Outreach** – Several food providers cited the need for increased awareness of the food resources available, and also awareness of the need within the Valley. Some suggested that any messaging used to raise awareness of the resources available should be written in a way that helps people in need feel more comfortable receiving help. Although awareness and outreach could be improved, none of the providers suggested that their programs are underutilized. However, raising awareness about the resources available might also serve to raise awareness of the need, resulting in additional resources from community members who are able to make contributions of food or funds to local pantries.
- **Transportation** – There are some mobile food options available in the Valley—most notably the Meals on Wheels program and the Connecticut Food Bank’s Mobile Food Pantry that visits Derby once per month—but that does not overcome the transportation barrier faced by many in need. It is possible that a Valley mobile food pantry (which was evaluated as an area for potential collaboration in the online survey) that could distribute food to multiple sites throughout the Valley each month might help eliminate this barrier, but it would necessarily require increased communication and collaboration amongst the existing pantries.

Potential Collaborations

In the online survey, respondents were asked to review four concept ideas for potential collaboration with other food providing organizations in the Valley. Each concept was presented separately, and was followed by a series of questions asking the respondent to rate the concept on how much they like it, how well they think it would work in the Valley, and how interested they would be in collaborating with others on the proposal. The concepts were meant to be a starting point for future discussion and exploration, and were not (and are not now) being proposed as final ideas that will be implemented in the Valley. The proposals that were included in the survey can be reviewed in Table 8 below.

TABLE 8. Proposals for Collaboration
A system or database of exchanged information to avoid duplication of services in the same distribution period; to minimize over-utilization of food resources
Mobile food pantry to bring food directly to neighborhoods throughout the Valley on a regular basis, particularly to serve people who face transportation barriers
Neighborhood food drives , in which neighbors collect food from within their neighborhood on a bi-weekly or monthly schedule and deliver it to the area food bank
Creation of a “Valley Food Bank Network” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help support and ensure timely referrals to the pantries/providers within the Network • To help coordinate the development and delivery of food within the Valley area food system; this could include ‘swap excess’ and pickup exchanges among Network participants • To ensure that all local pantries are stocked with a variety of food items • To meet and exchange ideas, information, data collection and best practices

These proposals were presented to respondents one at a time in a random order. After respondents had read and rated all four of the collaboration proposal concepts, they were asked to rank them in order of preference from 1 (most preferred) to 4 (least preferred). This ranking exercise served as a tie-breaker to assess the proposals in relation to one another.

After all the respondents ranked the proposals in order of preference (Table 9), the mobile food pantry was ranked first, followed in order by the system or database of exchanged information, the Valley Food Bank Network, and neighborhood food drives. Interestingly, the food bank network is the proposal that every pantry indicated liking very much or somewhat, but it was also the one with the least interest in collaborating, with only 38% extremely or very interested in doing so. However due to the small sample size and the hypothetical conditions under which the proposals were considered, this information should be used primarily as a starting point for further discussion of collaboration ideas. For the purposes of this report, the results have guided the direction of promising practices research into the proposed ideas for collaboration.

TABLE 9. Summary of Collaboration Proposal Concept Ratings				
Proposal	Like Very Much or Somewhat	Would Work Well or Very Well	Extremely or Very Interested in Collaborating	Rank
Mobile food pantry	88%	63%	63%	1
A system or database of exchanged information	88%	75%	75%	2
Creation of a “Valley Food Bank Network”	100%	50%	38%	3
Neighborhood food drives	88%	38%	63%	4

PROMISING PRACTICES

Considering the key areas for improvement as well as the ratings of proposals for potential collaboration in the Valley, promising practices have been identified to support further exploration of the proposals and promote additional discussion of ways that the network of food providers in the Valley can be strengthened. The promising practices discussed in this section are meant to be a starting point for future planning in the Valley, and are not prescriptive recommendations for how food providers in the Valley should collaborate.

Mobile Food Distribution

Of the four collaboration proposals evaluated by providers who participated in the online survey, the mobile food pantry was ranked first in order of preference, with 88% of respondents saying that they liked the idea, 63% saying that it would work in the Valley, and 63% saying that they would be interested in collaborating on such a proposal.

The Connecticut Food Bank Mobile Pantry, which began in 2010 with support from federal stimulus funding, operates in 30 communities in Connecticut (including one site in Derby and seven sites in cities and towns near the Valley). The existing distribution sites used by the Connecticut Food Bank Mobile Pantry are primarily churches and community centers. In addition to committing to allow the truck to visit once per month year round, the only requirement to be a host site is to provide a site coordinator and volunteers for the distribution hours. There are no costs or fees to be a host site, and the mobile pantry comes stocked with enough food for up to 300 visitors.

Last year with funding from CL&P, United Way of Southeastern Connecticut established a mobile food pantry to extend the reach of its Gemma E. Moran food center throughout New London County. Using a refrigerated truck stocked with food from the Connecticut Food Bank. The mobile pantry keeps a regular schedule, visiting locations throughout the county once per month with approximately 5,000 pounds of food—including perishable items not always available at food pantries. Each distribution stop is staffed by volunteers for a 1 to 2 hour period. About one week's supply of food is given to each visitor, based on their own selections with no questions asked. Recipients are asked to provide identification and to bring their own bags.

Another potential collaboration model to explore are mobile farmer's markets. Setting the Table (2014), a recent study by Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA) proposes the use of mobile food markets – a farmer's market on wheels – as a way to increase access to healthy food throughout a region and overcome transportation barriers. The Real Food Farm Mobile Market based in Baltimore, MD makes weekly visits to designated locations its service area, and accepts SNAP and WIC benefits as payment. This mobile market also makes free deliveries within its designated service area, with the only criteria being a minimum order of \$10 worth of food. CitySeed in New Haven has operated a similar

mobile market since 2012, and Urban Oaks in New Britain launched a mobile farmer's market in 2014 with a grant from the USDA and additional support from CCRPA. The Urban Oaks Mobile Farmer's Market operates from June through August, visiting one site per day in New Britain Monday through Thursday each week.

Measuring Food and Sharing Information

One of the challenges with measuring the capacity and impact of the food pantry system in the Valley is that there is not a standard measure used by all pantries to record the food they receive and distribute. Some record the food in terms of the number of bags or boxes, others record it in terms of the number of meals or the number of days' and weeks' worth of food provided. The Connecticut Food Bank – which all of the food pantries in the Valley are members of – measures food in pounds, with a standard conversion of 1.2 pounds per meal. The benefit of this measurement is that it can be used to approximate most other measures—with the exception of bags and boxes, which are not a standard size.

- 1.2 pounds of food = 1 meal
- 1 day worth of food = 3 meals = 3.6 pounds
- 1 week's worth of food = 7 days' worth of food = 21 meals = 25.2 pounds

In a guide by Jeff Thomas called How to Run a Food Pantry (2014 edition), pounds of food can also be used to approximate the level of need for food in a community. The formula is to multiply 234 pounds of food by the number of people below the federal poverty line to get the approximate amount of food aid (in pounds) that the community will need in a year. Using this formula, the need in the Valley can be estimated at 1.8 million pounds of food per year (7,710 residents in poverty x 234 pounds). This is only an estimate, but it is a widely used formula for determining community need for food that was developed by the state Food Bank Council in Michigan in 1989. Although recent research suggests that the estimated need in pounds should be 228.6 pounds (Map the Meal Gap, 2012) or 236 pounds (Bread for the World Institute annual report, 2000), the 234 pound formula is the most commonly used and is useful as a starting point.

Thomas' guide also uses pounds of food to recommend a formula for measuring the amount of food that should be given to food pantry users: 4 pounds of food x number of people in household x number of days. This is a rounded-up or simplified version of the Connecticut Food Bank formula, which uses 4 pounds of food per day instead of 3.6 per day to approximate the amount of food that will constitute three meals per person.

Finding consensus on a standard way to measure need for food, food capacity, and food distributed is the first step toward the development of a system or database of exchanged information—which was the 2nd highest rank proposal for collaboration in the online survey of Valley food pantries. The proposal was liked by 88% of respondents, with 75% indicating that they think it could work well or very well, and also

75% interested in collaborating on such a system. However, the acceptance and use of such a system is likely to depend on the details of its design and implementation. There are privacy concerns and differences in record keeping and eligibility requirements used by each pantry that will make it difficult to use such a system to limit duplication of services within a distribution period—which according to the pantry user research conducted for this report, may not be a worthwhile application of the database since only 11% of pantry users visit more than one pantry per month.

The system or database of exchanged information could be developed as a centralized repository of information about the food system in the Valley, including statistics and data on food distributed over time that could be used to inform future collaboration and communication efforts, enabling the participating pantries to speak about their impact with one voice.

Communication and Collaboration

One promising practice in communication and collaboration for the future of the food system in the Valley is already active in the form of the Valley Council Food Security Task Force. By bringing all of the key stakeholders together to discuss the future of the food security system in the Valley, the task force is taking a leadership role in building collaborative relationships with food providers and setting goals for the future food security of the region. The establishment of this task force is akin to the model of a Food Policy Council such as those in the City of New Haven and New London County.

In terms of increasing communication and outreach to the public, Nourishing Change, a study released by United Way of Southeastern Connecticut and the New London County Food Policy Council in 2013 recommends the establishment of a food center resource list with all relevant information about area pantries as well as details about other food resources. This report includes such a guide, which is intended to be a useful reference for people in need of food as well as people who want to provide food and assistance to those in need. Food When You Need It can be found in Appendix D of this report, and includes information about local supermarkets, farmer's markets, and meal programs, as well as guides from the 2-1-1 website on how to access critical food support programs such as SNAP, WIC, and summer food for students.

For facilitating communication with current and future food pantry users in the Valley area, the Nourishing Change study recommends creating a newsletter (print or electronic) and centralized website with information about nutritious food preparation. These outreach methods could be used to provide updated details about programs in the food guide, or to help increase the use (and minimize the waste) of food items by providing recipe ideas and other food preparation tips. With collaboration and input from all of the valley food providers, the newsletters could also be used to highlight each pantry's unique programs and offerings and introduce it to people in the community who might not be aware of what it has to offer, perhaps by featuring one organization per month.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Individuals and families who need food assistance have many good community resources in the Valley that are available to help, but there is still more that can be done to improve food security in the Valley. The recognition that the food programs and resources in the Valley—all of which provide a high level of service individually—might be able to identify areas for collaboration and work together toward enhancing food security throughout the region is the motivating purpose of the Valley Council Food Security Task Force. In less than one year since it was formed, the Task Force has made significant progress toward increasing food security in the Valley by bringing all of the stakeholders together and commissioning this study. The Task Force is a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

This report is the second product of the Task Force, with the first being the ongoing collaboration and communication amongst the food pantries, community leaders, school districts, and others with a vested interest in food security in the Valley that the Task Force represents. The following recommendations, which are based on the research conducted for this report and are consistent with the goals of the Task Force, are proposed in order to guide future discussions of collaboration and the continued good work of all involved organizations, individuals and other stakeholders.

1. Adopt a common method of measuring food

Coming to a mutual agreement about a common measure for all Valley pantries to use when measuring the food they give and receive is a logical first-step for future collaboration and the ongoing work of the Valley Council Food Security Task Force. A starting point for the discussion should be the standard measure used by the Connecticut Food Bank, an organization with which all Valley pantries are affiliated. The Connecticut Food Bank records food by the pound, and uses a standard of 1.2 pounds per meal to convert food into meals.

Adopting a common measure will enable the Valley to report its collective impact in the community, which can be used as a foundation upon which future collaborative efforts can be built. Ultimately, it is up to the Task Force and its member organizations to determine the measure—and the recording and data procedures—that will work best in the Valley.

2. Explore feasibility of additional sites for the Connecticut Food Bank

Mobile Pantry

Transportation is a significant barrier to accessing food assistance from pantries, with 43% of users who were surveyed at pantries citing it as a challenge—not to mention that it is certainly also a barrier for the people who were unable to make it to the pantry when the survey was being conducted. Furthermore, the Valley providers participating in the focus groups and interviews also reported that transportation is a barrier for people who need assistance from the pantry but are unable to get there. In addition, the

Mobile Food Pantry collaboration proposal was ranked 1st by all of the pantries that participated in the online survey phase of the research, with 63% of pantries indicating that they would be very or extremely interested in collaborating on such a proposal.

In the short term, it would be sensible to partner with the Connecticut Food Bank to add one or more additional mobile pantry distribution sites within the Valley. The Connecticut Food Bank operates a mobile food pantry that visits 30 sites throughout the state on a set day each month, with food for approximately 300 visitors at each distribution. The only mobile pantry distribution site currently established in the Valley is at St. Mary's Church in Derby. Requirements to host a distribution site are to provide a site coordinator and volunteers during the hours of distribution, as well as a commitment to host the mobile pantry at the chosen site on a recurring monthly basis all year long.

Based on the current (as of December 2014) schedule of the mobile pantry, there are several potential dates to consider in discussion with the Connecticut Food Bank when exploring the possibility of additional sites for mobile food distribution in the Valley.

- 1st Thursday of the Month (morning distribution currently scheduled in Waterbury)
- 2nd Monday of the Month (morning distribution currently scheduled in Wallingford)
- 2nd Tuesday of the Month (morning distribution currently scheduled in Torrington)
- 2nd Wednesday of the Month (morning distribution currently scheduled in Danbury)
- 2nd Friday of the Month (morning distribution currently scheduled in Ridgefield)
- 3rd Monday of the Month (no distributions scheduled)
- 3rd Friday of the Month (afternoon distribution currently scheduled in Southbury)
- 4th Monday of the Month (morning distribution currently scheduled in Canaan)
- 4th Friday of the Month (morning distribution currently scheduled in Hamden)

The days above are those where the Connecticut Food Bank Mobile Food Pantry has no more than one distribution scheduled, which is in a town in the western, southwestern, or central area of the state. If the Valley Council Food Security Task Force chooses to proceed, scheduling availability should be discussed with the Connecticut Food Bank.

3. Develop a Food Action Plan for the Valley

In other areas where stakeholders have come together to strengthen and plan for the long-term food security needs of a community, one way that plans are communicated is through the development of a Food Action Plan. A Food Action Plan is developed around goals, and includes a breakdown of concrete actions and strategies that can be implemented to reach the long-term goals. For example, the New Haven Food Policy Council has a Food Action Plan organized around three goals for the city: 1. Increase access to healthy food for all people in New Haven; 2. Strengthen New Haven's local food economy; 3. Encourage healthy food choices through education and marketing efforts. Each goal is supported by a

number of strategies that have an impact on reaching the goal, such as creating healthy food zones around schools, or establishing school garden programs.

The creation of a Food Action Plan for the Valley—or the development of a similar type of plan—is a worthy long-term goal of the Valley Council Food Security Task Force that will build upon the solid foundation already in place and set the course for ongoing and future collaboration efforts within the Valley.

APPENDIX A – ANNOTATED PROVIDER SURVEY

INTRO: Valley United Way and the Valley Council Food Security Task Force are working with the Community Results Center at United Way of Connecticut to outline the existing capacity of the food delivery system in the Valley and measure the need for food services in the region. This survey is an important piece of that research, and your input is critical to the success of the project.

SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND

1. To begin, please enter the name of your organization below
2. Which of the following best describes your organization? *Please select one answer below.*
 - 2a. Is your organization a tax-exempt charity recognized by the IRS?
 - Shelton High Food Bank / School district / No
 - Seymour Oxford Food Bank / Charitable organization / Yes
 - St Vincent de Paul / Charitable organization / Yes
 - Christ Episcopal Church, Ansonia / Religious/Faith-based / Yes
 - Parent Child Resource Center / Charitable organization / Yes
 - The Umbrella/BHcare / Service organization / Yes
 - The Salvation Army / Service organization / Yes
 - Spooner House / Charitable organization / Yes
3. Does your organization regularly provide any of the following to people in need? *Please select all that apply below.*

<i>% providing each item</i>	TOTAL (n=8)
Food (non-perishable)	100%
Food (fresh)	88%
Toiletries	88%
Winter wear (mittens, coats, hats)	75%
Other food assistance (grocery store gift cards, grocery shopping)	63%
Baby supplies (diapers, formula)	63%
Clothing	50%
Toys/gifts	50%
Furniture	38%
Meals (served on-site)	25%
Something else not listed (please specify)	25%
None of these	0%

ASK IF “NONE OF THESE” OR IF NO FOOD OPTION (1,2,3,4) SELECTED ABOVE

4. Does your organization ever provide food or any other form of food assistance to people in the community, even on an occasional basis? *Please select one answer below.*

Not applicable to any respondents.

SECTION 2 – PROVIDING FOOD SERVICES

TRANSITION: Now we’re going to ask some more specific questions about the food and food services that you provide. Please remember that you can save your progress in this survey and return to it at any time if you need to gather additional information to answer these questions.

5. **Thinking about the past year, please indicate the percentage of staff/volunteer hours devoted to providing food or food services, as well as the percent of your annual budget that is allocated to providing food or food services to people in need. *Please enter whole numbers into the spaces below.***

	TOTAL (n=8)
% annual staff/volunteer hours	
Average percent	50%
# below 50%	3
% annual budget	
Average percent	35%
# below 50%	5

6. **Would you say that the staff/volunteer hours and the allocations in your annual budget devoted to food services are more, less, or about the same as 3 years ago? *Please select one answer for each below.***

Dropdown menu options: More than 3 years ago, About the same as 3 years ago, Less than 3 years ago

	TOTAL (n=8)
% annual staff/volunteer hours	
More	25%
About the same	75%
Less	-
% annual budget	
More	25%
About the same	75%
Less	-

7. Does your organization accept volunteers? *Please fill in the information below.*

	TOTAL (n=8)
Yes (<i>go to Q7a</i>)	88%
No (<i>skip to Q8</i>)	12%

7a. Please tell us more about your volunteer needs by filling in the information below.

	TOTAL (n=7)
Minimum age to volunteer	
Under 18	57%
18 or older	43%
Types of volunteers accepted	
Court appointed	71%
High school	86%

8. In the past year, what percentage of the food you provided came from each of the sources listed below? Your best estimate is fine. *Please enter whole numbers for each item below. Your responses must sum to 100%.*

<i>Average % allocated to each</i>	TOTAL (n=8)
Purchased using funds allocated for this purpose	20%
Food drives coordinated by others	31%
CT Food Bank	15%
Valley United Way Corporate Volunteer Council	12%
Community members who are not members/employees of your organization	8%
Food drives coordinated by your organization	5%
From members/employees of your organization	4%
Another food pantry or food service provider (specify below)	1%
Some other source not listed (specify below) * Purchased from local supermarkets, BJ's * Churches	4%

9. Which of the following food items are usually in stock at your organization? *Please select all that apply from the list below.*

<i>% indicating item usually in stock</i>	TOTAL (n=8)
Fruit (canned)	100%
Jelly	100%
Macaroni and Cheese	100%
Pasta (dry)	100%
Peanut Butter	100%
Vegetables	100%
Baked Beans	88%
Beef stew	88%
Cereal (regular size boxes/bags)	88%
Frozen meats	88%
Hamburger Helper/Tuna Helper	88%
Rice (white, brown, mixed)	88%
Soups	88%
Spaghetti sauce	88%
Tuna/salmon/sardines (canned)	88%
Beans (other varieties)	75%
Coffee	75%
Crackers	75%
Dried peas, beans, legumes	75%
Juice	75%

<i>% indicating item usually in stock</i>	TOTAL (n=8)
Ketchup	75%
Mayonnaise/Miracle Whip	75%
Meats (canned chicken, ham, SPAM)	75%
Pasta (canned)	75%
Corned beef hash	63%
Snack food (fruit snacks, granola bars)	63%
Cooking oil	50%
Flour	50%
Hot Cereal	50%
Mustard	50%
Sugar	50%
Tea	50%
Dairy (fresh milk, cheese)	38%
Fruit (dried)	38%
Powdered Milk	38%
Fresh produce	25%
Nuts	25%
Baby food	13%
Baby formula	13%
Vinegar	13%

10. If a person or group wanted to make a donation based on your top 5 needs, which of the items below would be in the top 5? *Please select your top 5 needs from the list below. If none of your top 5 needs are listed, please use the additional "other" rows to enter your top 5 needs.*

<i>% listing in their Top 5</i>	TOTAL (n=8)
Cereal (regular size boxes/bags)	50%
Meats (canned chicken, ham, SPAM)	50%
Peanut Butter	50%
Tuna/salmon/sardines (canned)	50%
Frozen meats	38%
Beef stew	25%
Spaghetti sauce	25%
Vegetables	25%
Coffee	13%
Cooking oil	13%
Crackers	13%
Dairy (fresh milk, cheese)	13%
Fresh produce	13%
Fruit (canned)	13%
Hamburger Helper/Tuna Helper	13%
Hot Cereal	13%
Macaroni and Cheese	13%
Pasta (dry)	13%
Powdered Milk	13%
Rice (white, brown, mixed)	13%
Snack food (fruit snacks, granola bars)	13%
Soups	13%
Tea	13%

NOTE: Needs listed in the top 5 by two or more organizations are color-coded.

<i>Top 5 at each:</i>	Shelton High Food Bank	Seymour Oxford Food Bank	St Vincent de Paul	Christ Episcopal Church, Ansonia	Parent Child Resource Center	The Umbrella/ BHcare	The Salvation Army	Spooner House
#1	Cereal	Beef stew	Beef stew	Crackers	Fruit (canned)	Cereal	Cereal	Cereal
#2	Frozen meats	Frozen meats	Hamburger/ Tuna Helper	Meats (canned)	Pasta (dry)	Dairy (fresh milk, cheese)	Coffee	Meats (canned)
#3	Peanut Butter	Meats (canned)	Macaroni and Cheese	Peanut Butter	Rice (white, brown, mixed)	Fresh produce	Cooking oil	Peanut Butter
#4	Snack food	Peanut Butter	Meats (canned)	Soups	Tuna/salmon/sardines (canned)	Frozen meats	Hot Cereal	Powdered Milk
#5	Spaghetti sauce	Tuna/salmon/sardines (canned)	Spaghetti sauce	Tuna/salmon/sardines (canned)	Vegetables	Vegetables	Tea	Tuna/salmon/sardines (canned)

11. Do you ever have items available to accommodate any of the following special requests? *Please select all that apply below.*

<i>% saying "yes" for each item</i>	TOTAL (n=8)
Personal care items (toothbrushes, toothpastes, deodorant)	100%
Holiday food (specify holidays below)	88%
Household items (toilet paper, dish soap, detergent)	88%
Dietary restrictions (gluten-free, low sodium, etc.)	75%
Ethnic/cultural food items	63%

12. For each month listed below, please indicate the typical amount of food you have available and the level of need or demand for food. If there are months where your organization is closed or not operational for the majority of the month, please mark "Closed" for that month.

TOTAL* (n=7)	<u>Amount of food typically available</u>			<u>Need/Demand for food from your organization</u>			<u>CLOSED</u>
	Surplus	Fully Stocked	Not Enough	Low	Average	High	
January	-	86%	14%	-	71%	29%	-
February	-	29%	71%	-	43%	57%	-
March	-	43%	57%	-	57%	43%	-
April	-	57%	43%	-	43%	57%	-
May	-	57%	43%	-	71%	29%	-
June	-	43%	57%	-	43%	57%	-
July	-	50%	50%	-	29%	57%	14%
August	-	33%	67%	-	29%	57%	14%
September	-	29%	71%	-	43%	57%	-
October	-	57%	43%	-	43%	57%	-
November	14%	71%	14%	-	29%	71%	-
December	29%	57%	14%	-	29%	71%	-
*Shelton High Food Bank did not respond to this question, and is not included in the results above.							

13. If you calculate a cost per meal for the food that you provide, please indicate the average cost per meal below? Your best estimate is fine. *Please enter a dollar amount in the space below, or select another answer option.*

	TOTAL (n=8)	Shelton High Food Bank	Seymour Oxford Food Bank	St Vincent de Paul	Christ Episcopal Church, Ansonia	Parent Child Resource Center	The Umbrella/ BHcare	The Salvation Army	Spooner House
Calculate a cost per meal	38%	No	No	No	Yes	No	Don't Know	Yes	Yes
Avg. Cost	\$2.49	-	-	-	\$0.47	-	-	\$4.00	\$3.00

14. How does your organization quantify the amount of food that it provides? *Please select all that apply.*

<i>X = selected</i>	TOTAL (n=8)	Shelton High Food Bank	Seymour Oxford Food Bank	St Vincent de Paul	Christ Episcopal Church, Ansonia	Parent Child Resource Center	The Umbrella/ BHcare	The Salvation Army	Spooner House
Bags	38%	X		X		X			
Days	38%		X		X			X	
Food items	25%		X			X			
Meals	25%							X	X
Boxes	13%					X			
Do not track	13%						X		

15. How many units of food do you typically provide to an individual on a single visit? *Please enter whole numbers below. [ONLY SHOW ITEMS BELOW THAT WERE SELECTED IN Q14]*

<i>X = selected</i>	TOTAL (n=8)	Shelton High Food Bank	Seymour Oxford Food Bank	St Vincent de Paul	Christ Episcopal Church, Ansonia	Parent Child Resource Center	The Umbrella/ BHcare	The Salvation Army	Spooner House
Bags	4.66	5		6		3			
Days	5.66		7		7			3	
Food items	30					30			
Meals	15							9	21
Boxes	2					2			
Do not track	-						X		

16. How many times per month can an individual receive food from your organization? *Please select one answer below.*

17. How many individuals reach this limit, if any, in a typical month? *Please enter a whole number into each space below, or select "Individuals rarely or never reach our usage limit."*

<i>X = selected</i>	TOTAL (n=8)	Shelton High Food Bank	Seymour Oxford Food Bank	St Vincent de Paul	Christ Episcopal Church, Ansonia	Parent Child Resource Center	The Umbrella/ BHcare	The Salvation Army	Spooner House
No limit	38%	X			X	X			
Not tracked	13%						X		
Once monthly	50%		X	X				X	X
# reaching limit (if applicable)		-	90	60	-	-	-	Rarely	500

18. How many individuals do you provide food to in a typical month? *Please enter a whole number into the space below. Your best estimate is fine.*
19. How many of the [INSERT #] of individuals that you provide food to in a typical month are from multi-person households? *Please enter a whole number into the space below. Your best estimate is fine.*

	TOTAL (n=8)	Shelton High Food Bank	Seymour Oxford Food Bank	St Vincent de Paul	Christ Episcopal Church, Ansonia	Parent Child Resource Center	The Umbrella/ BHcare	The Salvation Army	Spooner House
Individuals	1960	250	225	200	450	20	15	300	500
Multi-person HH	1385	250	70	180	315	15	10	95	450
Single-person HH	575	0	155	20	135	5	5	205	50
Breakdown									
Multi-person HH	71%	100%	31%	90%	70%	75%	67%	32%	90%
Single-person HH	29%	0%	69%	10%	30%	25%	33%	68%	10%

20. Does household size factor into the amount of food that you provide on a single visit? *Please select one answer below and fill in the blank with a whole number.*

	TOTAL (n=8)
No, we provide a set amount of food based on a household of ____ people	-
Yes, we provide food based on the total number of people in the household	100%

21. In the event that you are unable to provide food assistance to someone in need using resources on hand, which of the following would you do? *Please select all that apply below.*

<i>% saying "yes" for each item</i>	TOTAL (n=8)
Give the person information about other local organizations to contact	88%
Suggest that the person contact 2-1-1 for assistance	50%
Reach out to other local organizations directly	25%
Would not do any further outreach/assistance	0%

22. Which local organizations would you reach out to or refer people to for assistance? *Please enter the names of the organizations below.*

- Salvation Army (x4)
- St. Vincent De Paul (x3)
- Spooner House (x3)
- 2-1-1
- CT Food Bank
- Religious Organizations
- TEAM
- Other food pantries
- Christ Church
- Seymour-Oxford Food Bank
- No referrals made in past year (x1)

SECTION 3 – PROPOSALS FOR COLLABORATION

INTRO SCREEN: In this next section, we'd like to get your opinion about some ideas for potential collaborations or cooperative initiatives that food service programs in the Valley may be interested in participating in. These ideas are merely proposals, but with your candid assessment, we can identify the ideas, if any, that are worth exploring further in the Valley.

As you read each proposal on the screens that follow, please keep in mind that the goals of this research project are to identify opportunities to strengthen the food network within the Valley, and to support the ongoing work and efforts of organizations throughout the Valley in a way that is sustainable for the long-term.

We want to hear your ideas as well. You are invited to provide additional comments or feedback on each proposed idea, and at the end of this section you will have a chance to share any other ideas or feedback you have.

23. Ratings of the 4 proposals

Proposal 1: A system or database of exchanged information					
How much do you like this proposal?		How well do you think this proposal would work in the Valley?		How interested would you be in collaborating with/participating in a proposal like this?	
	TOTAL (n=8)		TOTAL (n=8)		TOTAL (n=8)
Like it very much/somewhat	88%	Would work well/very well	75%	Extremely/very interested	75%
Neither like nor dislike	13%	Not sure how well it would work	25%	Somewhat interested	13%
Dislike it somewhat/very much	0%	Would not work well/at all	0%	Not very/not at all interested	13%

Proposal 2: Mobile Food Pantry					
How much do you like this proposal?		How well do you think this proposal would work in the Valley?		How interested would you be in collaborating with/participating in a proposal like this?	
	TOTAL (n=8)		TOTAL (n=8)		TOTAL (n=8)
Like it very much/somewhat	88%	Would work well/very well	63%	Extremely/very interested	63%
Neither like nor dislike	13%	Not sure how well it would work	38%	Somewhat interested	25%
Dislike it somewhat/very much	0%	Would not work well/at all	0%	Not very/not at all interested	13%

Proposal 3: Neighborhood Food Drives					
How much do you like this proposal?		How well do you think this proposal would work in the Valley?		How interested would you be in collaborating with/participating in a proposal like this?	
	TOTAL (n=8)		TOTAL (n=8)		TOTAL (n=8)
Like it very much/somewhat	88%	Would work well/very well	38%	Extremely/very interested	63%
Neither like nor dislike	12%	Not sure how well it would work	63%	Somewhat interested	38%
Dislike it somewhat/very much	0%	Would not work well/at all	0%	Not very/not at all interested	0%

Proposal 4: Creation of a “Valley Food Bank Network”					
How much do you like this proposal?		How well do you think this proposal would work in the Valley?		How interested would you be in collaborating with/participating in a proposal like this?	
	TOTAL (n=8)		TOTAL (n=8)		TOTAL (n=8)
Like it very much/somewhat	100%	Would work well/very well	50%	Extremely/very interested	38%
Neither like nor dislike	0%	Not sure how well it would work	50%	Somewhat interested	63%
Dislike it somewhat/very much	0%	Would not work well/at all	0%	Not very/not at all interested	0%

24. Now that you've evaluated all of the proposals, please rank them in your order of preference. The proposal you like the most should be ranked first, and the proposal you like the least should be ranked fourth.

<i>Average rank given to each proposal (lower # is better)</i>	TOTAL (n=8)
Mobile food pantry	2.13
A system or database of exchanged information	2.50
Creation of a "Valley Food Bank Network"	2.63
Neighborhood food drives	2.75

APPENDIX B – ANNOTATED USER SURVEY

INTRO: Hi, my name is _____, and I am a volunteer helping Valley United Way with a study about the need for food in the Valley. It's important for us to hear from everyone in the community, and all participants will be entered in a drawing for a gift card to Stop and Shop.

Do you have a moment to take our short survey?

<i>(n=134)</i>	
Yes	96%
No	4%

1. Including yourself, how many adults and children live in your household?

<i>(n=129)</i>	TOTAL	Adults	Children
0	n/a	n/a	50%
1	28%	40%	16%
2	18%	41%	21%
3	16%	14%	6%
4 or more	37%	5%	7%
Average # in Household	2.95	1.84	1.10

2. Now I have a few questions about you (and others in your household)...

<i>(n=129)</i>	AT LEAST 1 in HH	SELF	OTHERS*	OTHERS^
Are you/others currently unemployed?	85%	82%	32%	45%
Do you/others receive Food Stamps/SNAP?	68%	63%	22%	30%
Do you/others receive WIC benefits?	12%	7%	5%	8%
Do you/others receive HUSKY health coverage?	67%	59%	40%	57%

**Among all households ^Among households with more than 1 person*

3. When you get food from a pantry, how many days does it usually last?

<i>(n=119)*</i>	TOTAL
1 to 7 days	40%
8 to 14 days	40%
15 days or more	19%
Average # of days	12

6 first time users and 4 users who declined to answer are not included.

4. **How many times do you usually get food from pantries each month?**

<i>(n=119)*</i>	TOTAL
One time	87%
Two times	10%
Three or more times	3%
Average	1.1 times/mo.

6 first time users and 4 users who declined to answer are not included.

5. **How many food pantries do you visit each month?**

<i>(n=121)*</i>	TOTAL
One	74%
Two	22%
Three or more	4%
Average	1.3 pantries/mo.

6 first time users and 4 users who declined to answer are not included.

6. **Please tell me how often these barriers or challenges affect your ability to get the food you need:**

<i>(n=129)</i>	Usually/ Sometimes	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely/ Never	N/A
Not enough food available at pantry	48%	17%	31%	47%	5%
Not enough healthy food available	47%	18%	29%	49%	5%
Transportation to food pantry	43%	23%	20%	57%	0%
Transporting food received	34%	20%	14%	65%	1%
Special dietary/health needs	33%	18%	15%	65%	2%
Food pantry hours of operation	29%	14%	16%	67%	3%
Storing food received	14%	9%	5%	85%	1%

APPENDIX C – SUMMARY OF PROVIDER INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP

Below are bullet-point summaries of the responses collected in the focus group and the provider interviews. The focus group included only school districts, whereas the provider interviews were conducted with key staff at local food pantries. Although both groups are comprised of important food providers, their missions and service are sufficiently different to necessitate summarizing their responses separately.

Focus Group Responses

Food service representatives from four valley area school districts participated in a 90 minute focus group discussion in June 2014. Dominic Golia (Ansonia), Jennifer Syrowsky (Oxford), Cindy Brooks (Seymour) and Megan (Derby) participated in the discussion.

Food resources

Participants were asked to generate a list of food resources they are aware of in the valley towns, which were recorded on butcher paper for reference throughout the discussion. The food resources identified are as follows:

Food Pantries:

- Salvation Army
- Spooner House

Grocery Stores:

- Stop and Shop
- Big Y
- Walmart

Emergencies:

- Shelters
- Red Cross
- Local Churches

Student Meals:

- School lunch programs
- Summer meal programs

Other:

- Farmer's markets
- Donations from local restaurants

Role of school districts

Next, participants were asked to describe the role that school districts have in the food system in the valley, as well as the role that they ought to have:

- School districts provide up to 2 meals a day to kids during the school year
- Schools are used as sites for summer meal programs (in eligible communities)
- Point families in the right direction if they call with concerns about food or other needs
 - Direct parents who call to dial 2-1-1 or local DSS office
 - Try to connect more eligible students with free/reduced meals
- Food service is not primary mission of school districts, therefore options and flexibility are limited unless there is a significant food issue in the district

Barriers to increasing food security that school food providers face

Participants were then asked to describe the barriers they face as school food providers which make it more challenging to increase food security:

- Leftover/excess food must be discarded, and thus cannot be used to feed hungry students
- Students are not always able to pay for their meals
- Challenging for food services to know who is in need
- No discretionary authority to provide free/reduced meals on a per-case basis
- Some families are too proud to apply for free/reduced meals, and schools cannot initiate the process of registering students for the program

Strengths, weaknesses, and proposed solutions/improvements

Participants were asked in turn about the strengths of the food system in the valley, its weaknesses, and about proposed solutions to address those weaknesses and/or improve the food system in the valley. The discussion of strengths was brief—especially compared to the discussion of weaknesses and solutions—but this should not be interpreted to mean that the system is without strengths or fraught with weaknesses, as the framework of the discussion was built around identifying ways to improve the system. As a result, the responses summarized below pertain predominately to weaknesses and solutions:

Strengths

- Existing programs and providers that help families in the Valley
- SNAP is helpful to student families

Weaknesses in the food system, and ways to address them

- Limited communication among food providers in the system, and an absence of formal relationships for collaboration
 - Increase communication by having everybody at the table, and let collaborative relationships develop out of that
- Limited community awareness of resources and help available
 - Find new ways to identify people in need and reach out to them
 - Use outdoor advertising to communicate about 2-1-1 and other help that's available
 - Create a handout or flyer with information about resources that are available and can be sent home with students
- Food waste in schools
 - "Community bucket" in lunch room where students can deposit leftover food when clearing their tray, and other students can retrieve the leftovers if they are still hungry
 - Reconsider requirements that put food onto students' trays that they have no intention of eating (certain fruits or vegetables in particular)

Provider Interview Responses

Representatives from six Valley area food pantries and a representative from the Connecticut Food Bank participated in individual phone interviews lasting from 20 to 30 minutes in the summer and fall of 2014. Susan DeLeon (Umbrella), Meme Yocher (Christ Episcopal Church), LaQuita Boles (Salvation Army), Bob Lally (St. Vincent De Paul), Susan Agamy (ACT Spooner House), Tony Cassidy (Seymour Oxford Food Bank) and Tracy Helin (Connecticut Food Bank) participated in the interview phase. Their responses are summarized in the aggregate below.

Food resources available in the Valley

In each interview, participants were asked to list the food resources they are aware of in the Valley towns. The food resources identified are as follows, with the number of times each pantry was mentioned in a separate interview noted if applicable:

Food Pantries:

- Salvation Army (3x)
- St. Vincent De Paul(4x)
- ACT Spooner House (3x)
- Christ Episcopal Church (2x)
- Seymour Oxford Food Bank
- CT Food Bank Mobile Pantry

Meals:

- Master's Table
- Summer Meal Programs

Other:

- TEAM
- DSS

This list appears sparse compared with the one generated by the focus group, but it is important to note that the focus group list was generated as a collaborative exercise which led to more responses.

Resources that are missing or underrepresented in the Valley

After sharing information about the resources that are known in the Valley, respondents were asked about what resources they think are missing, underrepresented, or could be expanded upon in the Valley. Responses varied from programs that may have existed at one time (municipal welfare) to other types of assistance that may help families be better able to afford the food they need (utilities, rent assistance):

- Food vouchers as part of a municipal welfare program
- Community/volunteer service in exchange for food
- Food resources can be somewhat limited – particularly perishable food
- Outreach to homebound families
- Help with other needs (utilities, rent, etc.), which makes it easier for families to provide more of their own food
- Assistance to help families get on track to food security and plan for the future
- Food drives could happen more frequently
 - CT Food Bank does not organize food drives, but many food drives organized by others (media outlets, businesses, etc.) list CT Food Bank as the beneficiary
 - For Thanksgiving 2014, CT Food Bank is pairing local providers to food drives in order to have food collected stay in the community

Strengths, weaknesses, and proposed solutions/improvements

Interview participants were asked to identify strengths of the food system in the Valley, discuss its weaknesses, and to share ideas or thoughts that may address those weaknesses and/or improve the food system in the Valley. As with the focus group, most interview participants spent more time on weaknesses than on strengths, which is also likely due to the nature of the interview being conducted for a project that seeks to explore potential for improving the food system in the Valley. As a result, the majority of responses summarized below pertain to weaknesses and solutions:

Strengths

- The community comes together when big challenges or catastrophes arise
- Generous community – many good organizations to support
- All food providers have the same goal
- Willingness to help people in need and provide meals
- Food is collected and distributed locally

Weaknesses in the food system, and ways to address them

- Communication is challenging (with other food pantries and with the community)
 - Raise funding to spread the word about this issue to local businesses and community members
 - Local organizations could identify/co-brand as CT Food Bank partner
 - Include messaging to help change the way people think about this issue
 - Bring everyone to the table to increase communication amongst pantries
 - Develop common ways of measuring food provided
 - CT Food Bank uses 1.2 pounds = 1 meal formula to measure food provided
- Criteria varies across food pantries
 - Some pantries have eligibility requirements and some do not
 - Some follow all CT Food Bank best practices, others follow some
 - Not all organizations are able to help everyone who comes in
 - Some organizations limit number of visits per month, but not all do so
- Food and funds are limited
 - More towns could earmark funding for food services that help community members in need
- Difficult to provide healthy meals because healthy food costs more, and food is donated
- Hours of operation are limited
 - Increase paid staff and/or volunteer hours (must be done in conjunction with increase in food and/or funds)
- Language barriers

- Limited Collaboration
 - Bring everybody together to develop ideas for collaboration/coordination
 - Share data across programs in the Valley
 - Establish task force of key players/agencies to develop collaboration proposals
- Transportation is an issue for some households
 - A delivery network that can take food to people in need who have transportation barriers
 - A mobile food pantry to bring food to seniors or others with transportation barriers
- Some feel bad/ashamed/too proud to reach out for help
 - Communicate the programs and assistance in a positive way
 - Be sensitive and understanding when working with people who come forward for help
- Limited outreach to help families make the most of their food
 - Provide healthy food education
 - Offer meal preparation ideas with food provided

APPENDIX D – GUIDE TO FOOD RESOURCES

Beginning on the next page is a guide to accessing food in the Valley towns of Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour and Shelton. This guide is meant to be a useful tool that can be implemented right away in the Valley to increase awareness and communication about the food resources available. It includes detailed information about the services and needs of the eight food pantries in the Valley that participated in the research, as well as basic information (hours, location, phone number) for area grocery stores and community meals. The last several pages of the guide contain the full text of current 2-1-1 resource guides on food-related topics such as SNAP, WIC, Government Surplus food, and other topics.

Food When You Need It

A Guide to Food Resources in the Valley

ANSONIA | DERBY | OXFORD | SEYMOUR | SHELTON



IN THIS GUIDE:

Local Food Pantries

- Seymour Oxford Food Bank
- St Vincent de Paul
- Christ Episcopal Church
- The Salvation Army
- Spooner House
- Shelton High Food Bank

Connecticut Food Bank Mobile Food Pantry

Meal Programs

Farmer's Markets

Resource Guides from 2-1-1

- Government Surplus Food
- Food Stamps (SNAP)
- School Meal Programs
- Summer Food Program
- WIC

About This Guide

This guide was developed as part of a report on hunger and food security commissioned by the Valley United Way and the Valley Council Food Security Task Force. Its purpose is to provide an overview of the food resources available in the Valley, and to communicate the ways that you can help others or help yourselves to access food when you need it.



The most up-to-date version of this guide can be viewed online or downloaded and printed from www.valleyunitedway.org or by scanning the QR code.



Whether you need help or want to give help, United Way 2-1-1 is your one-stop connection to the local services you need, from utility assistance, food, housing, child care, after school programs, elder care, crisis intervention and much more.

24 hours a day, 365 days a year, **dial 2-1-1 or search online at www.211ct.org**



Local Food Pantries by Town

Below and on the following pages are food pantries in the Valley region, organized alphabetically by town name. Hours and information are current as of December 2014. Please contact the pantry before visiting to confirm hours, availability and eligibility.

ANSONIA – Christ Episcopal Church Kathleen Samela Memorial Food Bank

Contact Information:

56 South Cliff Street
Ansonia, CT 06401
(203) 734-2715
samelafoodbank@sbcglobal.net

Hours:

Tue – 9:00am to 1:30pm
Wed – 9:00am to 1:30pm
Thu – 9:00am to 2:00pm
Fri – 9:00am to 2:00pm

Eligibility Criteria:

Must have need for food,
photo identification

About Food Provided:

Approximately 7 days' worth of food provided, based on household size. Eligible households can receive food as needed.

Other Resources:

Clothing, Personal care items, Winter wear, Baby supplies, School supplies, Toys/gifts, Toiletries

Accepts Volunteers: YES

Minimum age: 18
High school students: YES
Court-appointed: YES

Top 5 Food Needs:

Crackers, Canned meats, Peanut Butter, Soups, and
Canned Tuna/Salmon/Sardines

ANSONIA – Salvation Army

Contact Information:

26 Lester Street
Ansonia, CT 06401
(203) 736-0707
laquita.boles@use.salvationarmy.org

Hours:

Closed daily 12-12:30pm for lunch
Mon – 10:00am to 2:00pm
Tue – 10:00am to 2:00pm
Wed – 10:00am to 2:00pm
Thu – 10:00am to 2:00pm
Fri – 10:00am to 2:00pm

Eligibility Criteria:

Must have need for food,
household income below
150% of federal poverty
level

About Food Provided:

Approximately 3 days' worth of food provided, based on household size. Eligible households can receive food once monthly.

Other Resources:

Clothing, Personal care items, Winter wear, School supplies, Toiletries, Holiday food baskets

Accepts Volunteers: YES

Minimum age: 18
High school students: YES
Court-appointed: YES

Top 5 Food Needs:

Cereal, Coffee, Cooking oil, Hot cereal, and Tea

Local Food Pantries by Town (continued)

DERBY – St. Vincent De Paul		
Contact Information: 237 Roosevelt Drive Derby, CT 06418 (203) 734-7577 jimgcgre@hotmail.com	Hours: Mon – 9:30am to 2:30pm Tue – 9:30am to 2:30pm Wed – 9:30am to 2:30pm Thu – 9:30am to 2:30pm Fri – 9:30am to 2:30pm Sat – 9:30am to 12:00pm	Eligibility Criteria: Must have need for food
About Food Provided: Approximately 6 bags of food provided, based on household size. Eligible households can receive food once monthly.	Other Resources: Personal Care Items, Holiday Food Baskets	
Accepts Volunteers: YES Minimum age: 16 High school students: YES Court-appointed: YES	Top 5 Food Needs: Beef stew, Hamburger/Tuna Helper, Macaroni and cheese, Canned meats, and Spaghetti sauce	

SEYMOUR – Seymour Oxford Food Bank		
Contact Information: 91 Church Street Seymour, CT 06478 (203) 888-7826 SOFBInc.1@gmail.com	Hours: Mon – 9:00am to 11:00am Wed – 9:00am to 11:00am <i>Staff available by phone on Mondays and Wednesdays, Food pickup by appt only</i>	Eligibility Criteria: Resident of Seymour or Oxford Bring current piece of mail with name and address
About Food Provided: 7 days' worth of food is provided, based on household size. Eligible households can receive food once monthly.	Other Resources: Personal Care Items	
Accepts Volunteers: YES Minimum age: 13 High school students: YES Court-appointed: NO	Top 5 Food Needs: Beef stew, Frozen meats, Canned meats, Peanut butter, and Canned Tuna/Salmon/Sardines	

Local Food Pantries by Town (continued)

SHELTON – Spooner House		
Contact Information: 30 Todd Road Shelton, CT 06484 (203) 225-0453 sagamy@actspooner.org	Hours – by appointment Mon – 11:00am to 2:00pm Tue – 11:00am to 2:00pm Wed – 11:00am to 2:00pm Thu – 11:00am to 2:00pm	Eligibility Criteria: Must have demonstrated need for food, and reside in Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Naugatuck, Oxford, Seymour or Shelton
About Food Provided: Approximately 7 days' worth of food provided, based on household size. Eligible households can receive food once monthly.		Other Resources: Personal care items, Winter wear, Baby supplies, Toiletries Household cleaning supplies and paper goods
Accepts Volunteers: YES Minimum age: 6 High school students: YES Court-appointed: YES	Top 5 Food Needs: Cereal, Canned meats, Peanut butter, Powdered milk, and Canned Tuna/Salmon/Sardines	

SHELTON – Shelton High Food Bank		
Contact Information: 60 Perry Hill Road Shelton, CT 06484 (203) 929-5866 audreydreya@aol.com	Hours – by appointment	Eligibility Criteria: Must have need for food, and a student in Shelton Public Schools
About Food Provided: Approximately 5 bags of food provided, based on household size. Eligible households can receive food as needed.		Other Resources: Personal care items, School Supplies, Winter wear, Baby supplies, Toiletries
Accepts Volunteers: YES Minimum age: 14 High school students: YES Court-appointed: NO	Top 5 Food Needs: Cereal, Frozen meats, Peanut butter, Snack food, and Spaghetti sauce	

Connecticut Food Bank Mobile Food Pantry

The Connecticut Food Bank operates a mobile food pantry that distributes food in various towns throughout the state. As of December 2014, Derby is the only Valley town that the mobile food pantry visits. As such, the mobile food pantry schedule for towns near the Valley is also included below.

The Connecticut Food Bank Mobile Food Pantry provides food at no cost to residents of any Connecticut town at all of its sites. Residents in need are welcome to visit any mobile pantry site to receive food.

Please contact the Connecticut Food Bank at 203-469-5000 or cfb@ctfoodbank.org for additional details and to confirm that the hours and location have not changed. For an updated schedule and complete list of mobile pantry stops in the state, visit www.ctfoodbank.org/connecticut-food-bank-programs/mobile-pantry/mobile-pantry-schedule

DERBY – St. Mary’s Church

Location:

212 Elizabeth Street
Derby, CT 06418

Hours:

1:00pm to 2:00pm on the first Tuesday of every month

BRIDGEPORT – Triumphant Ministries, Inc.

Location:

30 Florence Street
Bridgeport, CT 06610

Hours:

1:00pm to 2:00pm on the first Friday of every month

BRIDGEPORT – Victory Outreach Center

Location:

381 Jane Street
Bridgeport, CT 06608

Hours:

10:30am to 11:30am on the fourth Wednesday of every month – NO MOBILE PANTRY IN NOVEMBER

BRIDGEPORT – Gary Crooks Memorial Center

Location:

301 Bostwick Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06605

Hours:

12:30pm to 1:30pm on the fourth Wednesday of every month – NO MOBILE PANTRY IN NOVEMBER

Connecticut Food Bank Mobile Food Pantry (continued)

NEW HAVEN – St. Francis Catholic Church

Location:

397 Ferry Street
New Haven, CT 06513

Hours:

10:00am to 11:00am on the first Monday of every month in
the Bright Street parking lot

NEW HAVEN – Community Baptist Church

Location:

143 Shelton Avenue
New Haven, CT 06511

Hours:

10:00am to 11:00am on the first Wednesday of every
month

NEW HAVEN – Door of Salvation

Location:

3 Arch Street
New Haven, CT 06519

Hours:

10:00am to 11:00am on the third Tuesday of every month

WATERBURY – Police Activity League

Location:

64 Division Street
Waterbury, CT 06704

Hours:

10:30am to 11:30am on the first Thursday of every month

Meal Programs by Town

Information about congregate meals and meal programs in Valley towns is provided below. All information is current as of December 2014. Please contact the programs for additional information.

ALL VALLEY TOWNS – Meals on Wheels – TEAM, Inc.

Contact Information:

30 Elizabeth Street
Derby, CT 06418
(203) 736-5420

Program Information:

Meals on Wheels program delivers hot lunches to elderly people who are homebound or unable to prepare their own meals Monday – Friday. Weekend meals are also available. Ages 60+. Call to enroll in the program.

ANSONIA – Congregate Meals – Joseph Doyle Senior Center – TEAM, Inc.

Contact Information:

153 Main Street
Ansonia, CT 06401
(203) 736-1051

Program Information:

Hot lunches served Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 11:45am. Ages 60+. Call 24 hours in advance.

ANSONIA – Master's Table Community Meals

Contact Information:

56 South Cliff Street
Ansonia, CT 06401
(203) 732-7792

Program Information:

Community soup kitchen serves meals to anyone in need on the fourth Sunday of the month from January-March: 3-5pm and from April-December: 4-5:30pm. Volunteers ages 16+ are accepted to serve as cooks, food servers, greeters and dining room attendants.

DERBY – Congregate Meals – City of Derby Senior Center – TEAM, Inc.

Contact Information:

293 Main Street
Derby, CT 06418
(203) 736-1484

Program Information:

Hot lunches served Tuesday and Thursday at 11:45am. Ages 60+. Call 24 hours in advance.

DERBY – Congregate Meals – Senior Meals Choice at Griffin Hospital – TEAM, Inc.

Contact Information:

130 Division Street
Derby, CT 06418
(203) 736-5420 ext. 203

Program Information:

Hot meals served Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 5pm to 6:30pm and Thursday from 11:30am to 2pm. Ages 60+. Call to enroll and reserve meals 24 hours in advance.

Meal Programs by Town (continued)

OXFORD – Congregate Meals – City of Oxford Senior Center – TEAM, Inc.

Contact Information:

100 Old Church Road
Oxford, CT 06478
(203) 881-5231

Program Information:

Hot lunches served twice per month at 11:45am. Ages 60+.
Call for dates and reserve meals 24 hours in advance.

OXFORD – Meals on Wheels – CW Resources

Contact Information:

10 Elmwood Place
Danbury, CT 06810
(203) 982-6636

Program Information:

Two meals per day for persons who are homebound, elderly, or recuperating from an illness. Weekend meals are also available. Call for application.

SEYMOUR – Congregate Meals – Rev. A. Callahan House – TEAM, Inc.

Contact Information:

32 Smith Street
Seymour, CT 06483
(203) 888-4579

Program Information:

Hot lunches served Monday through Friday at 12:15pm.
Ages 60+. Call 24 hours in advance.

SHELTON – Congregate Meals – City of Shelton Senior Center

Contact Information:

81 Wheeler Street
Shelton, CT 06484
(203) 924-9324

Program Information:

Senior center serves lunch Monday through Friday at 11:45am. Call one day in advance by 12:00pm. Ages 60+.

Farmer's Markets by Town

Farmer's Markets in the Valley are listed below alphabetically by town with street addresses, telephone contact information, and hours of operation that are current as of December 2014. Please contact the market by phone to confirm hours and location.

ANSONIA - FARMER'S MARKET

89 West Main Street
Ansonia, CT 06401
203-736-5930

About the Market:

The Ansonia Farmer's Market was founded in July 2012 and is still establishing itself in the community. Please call to confirm dates and hours before traveling to the market.

Call for details

DERBY – GRIFFIN HOSPITAL FARMER'S MARKET

130 Division Street
Derby, CT 06483
203-732-7432

About the Market:

Everyone is invited to enjoy the freshness and convenience of buying locally grown produce right at the hospital's front door. The farmers' market also supports the local economy, with local farm, Aspetuck Valley Apple Barn of Easton and other local vendors providing a wide variety of produce. Located in the portico just outside the main entrance.

HOURS:

1pm to 4pm, *call for dates*

SEYMOUR - FARMER'S MARKET

Municipal Parking Lot
70 Pine Street
Seymour, CT 06483
203-723-8885

About the Market (2014 season):

The Seymour Farmers Market was established in 1995 for the purpose of supporting the downtown revitalization project. It was started in cooperation with former First Selectman John O'Toole, the CT Department of Agriculture, Guy and Pat Beardsley, and several local farmers.

HOURS:

Tues 12pm to 6pm, May through Nov.

With the continued cooperation of the current Board of Selectmen, CT Department of Agriculture, Gazy Brothers Farm. The market is host to Beldotti's Bakery of Stamford, Aradia Farm of Southbury, Carrot Top Kitchen, and Gazy Brothers Farm of Oxford.

SHELTON - FARM & PUBLIC MARKET

77 Canal Street E
Shelton, CT 06484
203-929-3080

About the Market (2014 season):

The Farm & Public Market is housed in a newly constructed 2,220 sq. ft. market pavilion. Part of the 10 acre Shelton Enterprise & Commerce Park, it is located on the Housatonic River in heart of downtown.

HOURS:

Sat. 9am to 1pm, Wed. 3pm to 6pm, June through Nov.

Resource Guides from 2-1-1

Below and on the following pages are resource guides from 2-1-1 on the topics of Government Surplus Food, School Meal Programs, Summer Food Programs, Food Stamps/SNAP, and WIC. The guides are current as of December 2014, and the most up-to-date versions can always be found on the 2-1-1 website at <http://www.211ct.org/>.

GOVERNMENT SURPLUS FOOD

The most up-to-date version of this guide can always be found online at <http://www.211ct.org/>

There are many government programs that utilize surplus food to feed people in need.

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) acquires agricultural commodities through price support programs, surplus removal, and direct purchases from national markets.
- These commodities are distributed through the USDA to the states and sometimes directly to local programs that provide food to people in need.
- In Connecticut, eligible schools, charitable institutions, summer camps, and agencies that operate surplus food distribution programs apply directly to the USDA for surplus foods.
- The Connecticut Department of Social Services administers The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) which distributes surplus foods to food banks, which, in turn, give food to member soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and food pantries that provide food to individuals and households.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR SURPLUS FOOD?

- Connecticut agencies serving specific groups (such as nursing homes serving the elderly, or day care centers serving preschool children)
- Connecticut homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and food pantries

HOW TO FIND PROVIDERS IN CONNECTICUT'S COMMUNITY RESOURCES DATABASE

Visit www.211ct.org and search by service name for Commodity Supplemental Food Program

SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

The most up-to-date version of this guide can always be found online at <http://www.211ct.org/>

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: Free or reduced price breakfasts and lunches are served in elementary and secondary schools to enrolled students whose family income is at or below 130% (free meals) or at or below 185% (reduced price meals).

Schools are not required to provide breakfast or lunch.

The School Lunch and Breakfast program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture and administered in Connecticut by the State Department of Education's Bureau of Health, Nutrition, Family Services, and Adult Education.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- Enrolled students in elementary and secondary schools that participate in the program.
- It is not necessary that the student be a United States citizen or legal resident.
- Free meals are for students with family income at or below 130% FPL
- Reduced price meals are for students with family income between 130% and 185% FPL

HOW TO OBTAIN SERVICE: Ask at child's school to see if the school offers this program; if so, obtain an application form from the school. Forms can be mailed to parents or sent home with the children. Parents who receive TFA or SNAP (food stamps) can put their State Assistance ID # on the form. They do not have to fill out the income section because if eligibility has been determined already for TFA or SNAP they are categorically eligible for free school meals.

TIMETABLE: Parents/guardians can apply for free/reduced meals at any time during the school year.

WILL OTHER KIDS KNOW THAT MY CHILD IS GETTING A FREE MEAL? All children receive the same meal and use the same eating facility regardless of what they are paying for the meals. It is illegal for students getting a free or reduced price meal to be given special meal tickets, be made to use different lines or rooms, or be given a different choice of food.

SUMMER FOOD PROGRAM

The most up-to-date version of this guide can always be found online at <http://www.211ct.org/>

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION: Federal program administered nationally by U.S. Department of Agriculture is administered in Connecticut by the Bureau of Health and Nutrition Services at the State Department of Education, which contracts with local "Sponsors" who manage the individual feeding sites.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: Federally funded free summer food program for children age 0-18. (18 year olds ARE included.) Children with disabilities are eligible through age 21. Most sites are "open" sites, and they do not restrict by address or income. "Closed" sites are limited to the children enrolled in the program and are not open to any other children.

Meals are served Monday-Friday. Some sites offer breakfast and lunch, others just lunch. There is no charge for any of the meals.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- No income/asset restrictions
- No residency restrictions
- Age 18 and under
- Age 21 and under if disabled

(Sites will probably not have baby food, but caregivers can cut food up and feed it to babies who can eat solid foods)

HOW TO OBTAIN SERVICE: Go to the site; It is not necessary to pre-register; Also, you can call the program sponsor to verify times, meals served and addresses.

FOR PROBLEMS ACCESSING SERVICE AT A SITE, CONTACT DOE'S BUREAU OF HEALTH AND NUTRITION SERVICES.

TO FIND SITES:

Go to the Department of Education's Summer Food Service web page: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320652>

FOOD STAMPS/SNAP (SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM)

The most up-to-date version of this guide can always be found online at <http://www.211ct.org/>

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION:

The Food Stamp program (now known as SNAP) is a federal program administered by the US Department of Agriculture and managed in Connecticut by the Department of Social Services (DSS). The following is summarized from the DSS website, <http://www.ct.gov/dss/cwp/view.asp?a=2353&q=411676>.

WHO CAN GET SNAP?

A person must be a U.S. citizen or an eligible non-citizen to qualify for SNAP.

U.S. citizens and certain legal immigrants who have little or no income are likely to be eligible for SNAP. This includes, but is not limited to, people who are:

- Unemployed
- Retired with no or low pension or Social Security income
- Working, but earning low wages
- On state cash assistance (TFA, SAGA, or State Supplement)
- Homeless
- Legal immigrants who are disabled and receiving disability benefits (SSI, or disability-related Medicaid) are eligible for SNAP without a waiting period.
- Students in post-secondary schools (college) can receive SNAP if:
 - Age under 18 or 50+
 - Physically or mentally disabled
 - Receiving TFA
 - Responsible for more than 50% of the care of a dependent family member if under age 6 or age 6-12 if adequate care is not available
 - Enrolled less than half time
 - Enrolled half time or more and employed a minimum of 20 hrs/wk
 - Placed in higher education by the Workforce Investment Act program.
 - Participating in a federally financed work study program during the regular school year
 - Participating in an on-the-job training program through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program, or in a program under Section 236 of the Trade Act of 1974, or in a Food Stamp Employment and Training program, or in an employment and training program for low income households that is operated by a state or local government entity.

USDA WEBSITE ON ELIGIBILITY

http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant_recipients/eligibility.htm

INCOME RESTRICTIONS

- Beginning July 1, 2009, income limit for most households is 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), with no net income or asset limit. Households with an elderly (ages 60+) or disabled member do not have to meet a gross income limit. Instead, shelter, medical, and other qualifying expenses are deducted from gross income. If the gross income of an elderly/disabled household is below 185% FPL, there is no asset test and there is no net income test. However, if the elderly/disabled household's income exceeds 185% FPL, the *net income after allowable deductions* cannot be more than 100% FPL and they cannot have more than \$3,250 in countable assets.
- Combat pay is not included as income.

CONTINUED: **FOOD STAMPS/SNAP**

ASSET RESTRICTIONS

- Elderly or disabled households with gross income over 185% FPL is \$3,250. There is no asset limit if gross income is at or below 185% of FPL.
- Not all assets count toward the asset limit.
- **The value of a house a person owns and lives in is not counted and a lien is not placed on a home.**
- **Retirement accounts are not counted as assets.**
- Car value is NOT counted as an asset.

WHERE DO PEOPLE APPLY?

- Apply for SNAP at the DSS office that serves your town or download an application at <http://www.ct.gov/dss/lib/dss/pdfs/applications/w-1e.pdf> and mail it in. Applicants can do their required interview by phone; it is not necessary to go to a DSS office.
 - Note: The Community Health Centers located throughout the state are designated SNAP Outreach sites and they can assist with eligibility screening. For a list of locations, see the 2-1-1 database: Benefits Assistance * Food Stamp/SNAP Recipients
- If disabled and unable to go to a DSS office, you can request that an authorized representative apply for you.
- People who apply for or receive SSI can apply for SNAP at the Social Security office located nearest their home.

WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE NEEDED?

- Identification
- Proof of citizenship or refugee status.
- Legal immigrants with permanent residence status ("green card") should call to ask what documentation is required.
- Proof of earned and unearned income
- For elderly/disabled households whose income exceeds 185% FPL, documentation of countable assets (bank account statements, stocks, bonds, CDs, etc.)
- Social Security numbers for everyone in the household.
- Verification of shelter expenses, such as rent receipt or lease, and utility bills.
- Verification of out-of-pocket child and dependent care expenses
- Verification of court ordered child support payments
- Elderly/disabled households should also verify out-of-pocket medical expenses.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET SNAP?

- The DSS office must act on applications within 30 days of the date a person submits a signed application. Eligible households will have benefits in their EBT account within four days of the date that DSS grants their application.
- In emergency situations, person may be eligible for Expedited SNAP, which can be obtained within 7 days instead of 30 days. (See EXPEDITED SNAP, below.)
- The 30 day period begins the day that the signed application is received in the DSS office. Also, the first month of SNAP is prorated from the day that the application is signed, so it is very important to at least put name and address on the application, SIGN it, and submit it to the appropriate DSS office, even if the applicant needs to provide more information and/or documentation to support the application.

CONTINUED: **FOOD STAMPS/SNAP**

EXPEDITED SNAP (also known as EMERGENCY FOOD STAMPS)

Some people can get SNAP benefits within seven days of the date they apply. To qualify for Expedited SNAP person must:

- Have income less than \$150 per month and assets of \$100 or less.
- **OR** have monthly rent/mortgage and utility expenses that are more than total monthly income plus liquid assets.
- **OR** be a destitute migrant or seasonal farm worker
- ID is the only documentation required for the first month of expedited SNAP

ELECTRONIC BENEFITS TRANSFER (EBT)

All benefits are issued into the recipient's EBT account. If your last name starts with A-F, you will receive benefits on that 1st of the month; G-N on the 2nd, and O-Z on the 3rd. Benefits are issued on these dates even if it's a holiday or weekend.

When granted SNAP, an EBT card is mailed to you, along with instructions on how to set up your PIN (Personal Identification Number). This number is your secret code that allows only you to access your benefits. If you give this number to someone else, they can access your benefits if they have your card. Keep your PIN number safe and do not keep it with your card. **Benefits removed from your EBT account will not be replaced.**

If you lose your EBT card, you must contact your worker to get a new card.

If your card is stolen, you must call 1-888-328-2666 and report it stolen so that the EBT card can be cancelled immediately.

WHAT IS THE APPEAL PROCESS IF SNAP BENEFITS ARE DENIED?

Request for appeal of a denial must be made within 90 days of the date of the decision notice. Request a hearing by calling the Fair Hearing Unit at 1-800-462-0134 or write to: Fair Hearing Unit, Department of Social Services, 25 Sigourney Street, Hartford, CT 06106.

ADVOCACY

For information concerning legal rights or for assistance with an appeal call Statewide Legal Services. End Hunger Connecticut provides advocacy for the food needs of low income children and adults in the State of Connecticut.

OTHER RESOURCES

End Hunger Connecticut has an online SNAP prescreening tool in English and Spanish at <http://www.ctfoodstamps.org/>. Also, End Hunger SNAP Outreach Advocates can assist with eligibility questions, problems with applications, and other services needed for recipients, ages 50+, to receive and maintain benefits under the SNAP/Food Stamp program. Services include pre-eligibility screening and assistance with applications, re-determinations, periodic review forms and verifications.

USDA designed Spanish-language SNAP Retailer Locator, an online search tool designed to help recipients find SNAP authorized stores near their home or workplace, see: <http://www.snapretailerlocator.com/>

TO FIND PROVIDERS IN CONNECTICUT'S COMMUNITY RESOURCES DATABASE:

Visit www.211ct.org and search by service name for Food Stamps/SNAP

WIC - WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN PROGRAM

The most up-to-date version of this guide can always be found online at <http://www.211ct.org/InformationLibrary/Documents/WIC%20cw.asp>

WIC is a federal grant program administered nationally by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (www.fns.usda.gov/wic/) and at the state level by the Connecticut State Department of Public Health (www.ct.gov/dph/wic)

WIC is not an entitlement program. Congress does not set aside funds to allow every eligible individual to participate in the program. It is a grant program for which Congress authorizes a specific level of funding each year.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

WIC provides specific nutritious foods and nutrition education to eligible pregnant women, postpartum women up to six months regardless of how pregnancy ends, breastfeeding women up to one year after delivery, and infants and children up to their fifth birthday. WIC participants receive monthly checks for the purchase of infant cereal, iron-fortified adult cereal, vitamin C-rich fruit or vegetable juice, eggs, milk, cheese, peanut butter, dried and canned beans/peas, canned fish, soy-based beverages, tofu, fruits and vegetables, baby foods, whole wheat bread, and other whole-grain products. Foods covered may depend upon the nutritional needs of the individual.

Recipients are re-certified every six months to determine if medical or nutritional risk exists. Recipients receiving WIC benefits in Connecticut must be state residents, but U.S. Citizenship or permanent residency status is not required.

ELIGIBILITY:

- Pregnant and up to 6 months postpartum or up to 12 months if breastfeeding.
- Child/children up to their fifth birthday.
- Income at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level. (NOTE: A pregnant woman is counted as 2 when determining family size; 3 if she is carrying twins, etc.)
- Must be at nutritional risk.
- Must be a Connecticut resident.
- It is not necessary to be a U.S. citizen or a documented immigrant.

OTHER WIC INFORMATION:

- If applicant lives with her/his parents and he/she is not on Healthy Start/Medicaid or does not have a job, the parents income is counted.
- An unborn child is counted in family size when determining income eligibility.
- WIC checks do not reduce SNAP benefits (food stamps).
- Food is prescribed according to the nutritional and developmental needs of the recipients.
- Checks must be picked up in person.
- Checks have expiration dates and must be used before expiration.
- Participants are given appointment times for nutrition education and the issuance of additional checks.
- Many stores accept the checks.
- Checks do not have a dollar amount; food items and amounts are specified on the vouchers, and these items can be bought regardless of the price.
- WIC Unit at the Connecticut Department of Public Health authorizes retailers to be able to accept WIC checks as payment for food.
- Between July and October, WIC recipients also receive \$15 coupons to buy fruits and vegetables at local farmers' markets.

CONTINUED: WIC

WAITING LIST/PRIORITY SYSTEM:

Sometimes, WIC agencies do not have enough money to serve everyone who needs WIC or calls to apply. When this happens, WIC agencies must keep a waiting list of individuals who want to apply and are likely to be served. WIC agencies then use a special system, called a Priority System, to determine who will get WIC benefits first when more people can be served. The purpose of the priority system is to make sure that WIC services and benefits are provided first to participants with the most serious health conditions such as anemia (low blood levels), underweight, and history of problems during pregnancy. WIC participants who move from one area or state to another are placed at the top of a waiting list when they move and are also served first when the WIC agency can serve more individuals. WIC participants who move can continue to receive WIC benefits until their certification period expires as long as there is proof that the individual received WIC benefits in another area or state. Before a participant moves, they should tell the WIC office. In most cases, WIC staff will give the participant a special card which proves that the individual participated in the WIC program. When the individual moves, they can call the new WIC office for an appointment and take the special card to the WIC appointment in the new area or state.

HOW TO APPLY:

Contact your local WIC office; (Note: There is no direct service at the Connecticut Department of Public Health)

FAIR HEARING

Anyone who has been denied WIC eligibility has the right to a fair hearing. Request for a hearing must be made within 60 days of the denial of benefits.

TO FIND PROVIDERS IN CONNECTICUT'S COMMUNITY RESOURCES DATABASE:

Visit www.211ct.org and search by service name for WIC

APPENDIX E – NEED PROFILES BY TOWN

The profile pages for each town that follow were developed to provide context to the discussion of food security and hunger issues in the Valley. The indicators included in the need profiles are organized into categories of housing, food assistance, income, and transportation. Each profile page is a snapshot of need in that town.

ANSONIA

Population: 19,188 | Households: 7,380

HOUSING



43% Renters
3,135 households

57% Homeowners
4,245 households

57% of renters and 45% of homeowners are housing burdened, meaning that their monthly housing costs are at least 30% of their income

FOOD ASSISTANCE

67% of students eligible for
Free and Reduced Lunch

1,574 students receive free lunches, and 349 students receive reduced price lunch

3,102 receive SNAP benefits

42% of households

377 receive WIC assistance (monthly average)

5% of households

INCOME

\$67,500 median family income

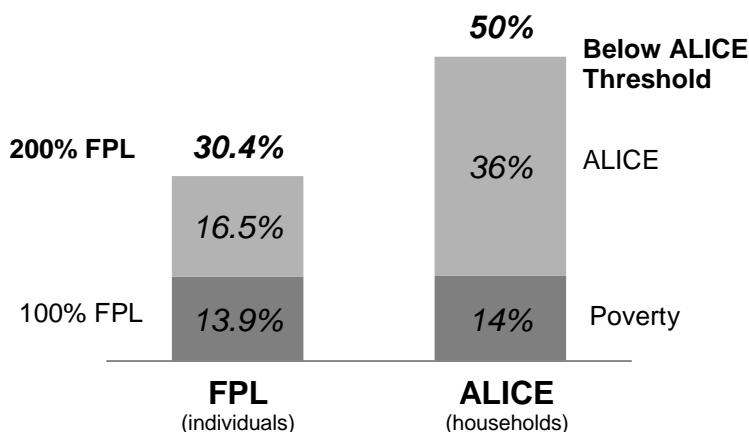
Unemployment **9.3%**

1,511 EITC claims (2012)



HOUSEHOLDS IN NEED

Measured by Federal Poverty Level and ALICE



2-1-1 CALL STATISTICS

Top 20 Service Requests (2013) # Requests

Public Assistance Programs	806
Housing/Shelter	412
Utilities/Heat	310
Financial Assistance	286
Information Services	205
Outpatient Mental Health Care	194
Food	165
Legal Services	165
Health Supportive Services	124
Substance Abuse Services	98
Benefits Screening	88
Personal/Household Goods	61
Tax Organizations and Services	57
Transportation	53
Employment and Training Programs	52
Individual and Family Support Services	44
Holiday Assistance	31
Legal Assistance	27
Psychiatric Support Services	26
Community Services	25

TRANSPORTATION

786 households have no vehicle
11% of all households



Sources:

- 2012 American Community Survey (5 year estimates)
- Connecticut Department of Labor, *Local Area Unemployment Statistics Report* (2013)
- Connecticut Department of Revenue Services, *2012 Individual Income Tax* (2012)
- Connecticut Voices for Children, *The Limits of Data on Free and Reduced Price Meal Eligibility in Connecticut* (2012)
- Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut (LARCC), *Connecticut Needs Social Service Programs* (2014)
- United Way ALICE Report (2014)

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DERBY

Population: 12,858 | Households: 5,195

HOUSING



40% Renters
2,073 households

60% Homeowners
3,122 households

55% of renters and 41% of homeowners are housing burdened, meaning that their monthly housing costs are at least 30% of their income

FOOD ASSISTANCE

51% of students eligible for
Free and Reduced Lunch

621 students receive free lunches, and 117 students receive reduced price lunch

1,753 receive SNAP benefits

34% of households

205 receive WIC assistance (monthly average)

4% of households

INCOME

\$63,967 median family income

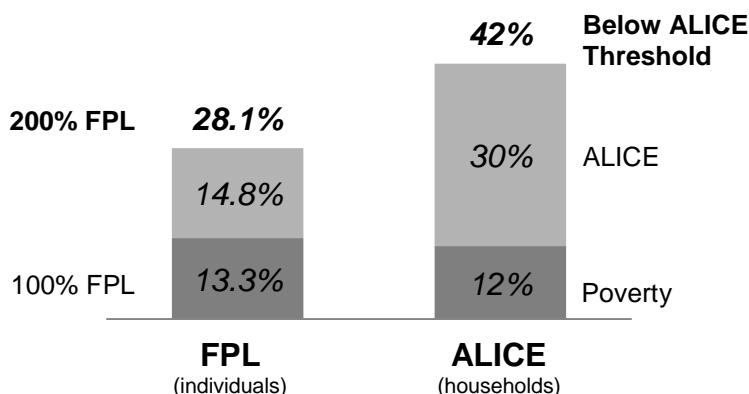
Unemployment **8.4%**

803 EITC claims (2012)



HOUSEHOLDS IN NEED

Measured by Federal Poverty Level and ALICE



2-1-1 CALL STATISTICS

Top 20 Service Requests (2013) # Requests

Public Assistance Programs	454
Housing/Shelter	205
Utilities/Heat	191
Financial Assistance	155
Information Services	105
Food	94
Outpatient Mental Health Care	94
Legal Services	89
Benefits Screening	57
Health Supportive Services	55
Substance Abuse Services	49
Employment and Training Programs	38
Personal/Household Goods	38
Transportation	30
Individual and Family Support Services	27
Legal Assistance	25
Tax Organizations and Services	25
Community Services	21
Consumer Complaints	19
Law Enforcement Agencies	16

TRANSPORTATION

553 households have no vehicle
11% of all households



Sources:

- 2012 American Community Survey (5 year estimates)
- Connecticut Department of Labor, *Local Area Unemployment Statistics Report* (2013)
- Connecticut Department of Revenue Services, *2012 Individual Income Tax* (2012)
- Connecticut Voices for Children, *The Limits of Data on Free and Reduced Price Meal Eligibility in Connecticut* (2012)
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OXFORD

Population: 12,602 | Households: 4,420

HOUSING



6% Renters
277 households

94% Homeowners
4,143 households

42% of renters and 30% of homeowners are housing burdened, meaning that their monthly housing costs are at least 30% of their income

FOOD ASSISTANCE

8% of students eligible for
Free and Reduced Lunch

112 students receive free lunches, and 42 students receive reduced price lunch

315 receive SNAP benefits

7% of households

35 receive WIC assistance (monthly average)

<1% of households

INCOME

\$118,221 median family income

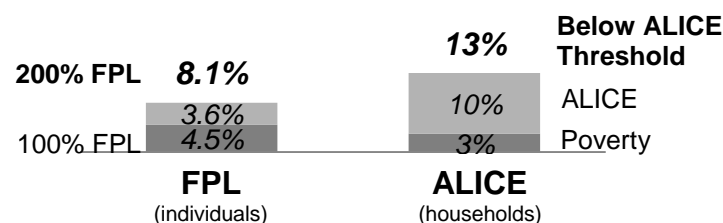
Unemployment **6.0%**

271 EITC claims (2012)



HOUSEHOLDS IN NEED

Measured by Federal Poverty Level and ALICE



2-1-1 CALL STATISTICS

Top 20 Service Requests (2013) # Requests

Public Assistance Programs	64
Outpatient Mental Health Care	47
Utilities/Heat	47
Health Supportive Services	21
Information Services	20
Food	17
Housing/Shelter	16
Financial Assistance	15
Individual and Family Support Services	13
Legal Services	13
Benefits Screening	12
Substance Abuse Services	10
Personal/Household Goods	9
Employment and Training Programs	8
Transportation	7
Consumer Regulation	6
Psychiatric Support Services	6
Leisure Activities	4
Specialty Medicine	4
Community Services	3

TRANSPORTATION

53 households have no vehicle

1% of all households



Sources:

- 2012 American Community Survey (5 year estimates)
- Connecticut Department of Labor, *Local Area Unemployment Statistics Report* (2013)
- Connecticut Department of Revenue Services, *2012 Individual Income Tax* (2012)
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SEYMOUR

Population: 16,487 | Households: 6,313

HOUSING



22% Renters
1,382 households

78% Homeowners
4,931 households

51% of renters and 38% of homeowners are housing burdened, meaning that their monthly housing costs are at least 30% of their income

FOOD ASSISTANCE

25% of students eligible for
Free and Reduced Lunch

431 students receive free lunches, and 115 students receive reduced price lunch

1,111 receive SNAP benefits

18% of households

141 receive WIC assistance (monthly average)

2% of households

INCOME

\$92,350 median family income

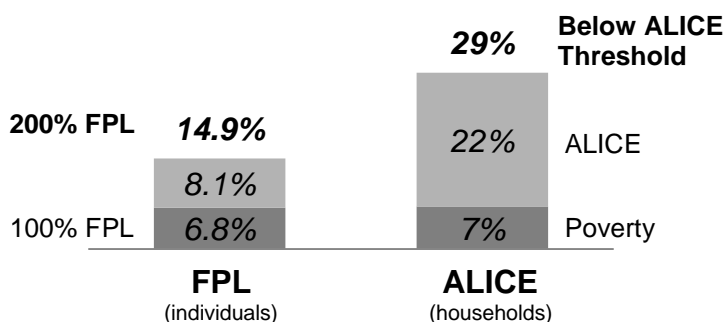
Unemployment **7.7%**

635 EITC claims (2012)



HOUSEHOLDS IN NEED

Measured by Federal Poverty Level and ALICE



2-1-1 CALL STATISTICS

Top 20 Service Requests (2013) # Requests

Public Assistance Programs	273
Utilities/Heat	182
Financial Assistance	97
Housing/Shelter	97
Outpatient Mental Health Care	93
Legal Services	88
Food	85
Information Services	80
Health Supportive Services	63
Benefits Screening	43
Individual and Family Support Services	40
Substance Abuse Services	36
Transportation	30
Employment and Training Programs	21
Tax Organizations and Services	21
Personal/Household Goods	20
Social Insurance Programs	19
Legal Assistance	15
Community Services	14
Law Enforcement Agencies	13

TRANSPORTATION

370 households have no vehicle
6% of all households



Sources:

- 2012 American Community Survey (5 year estimates)
- Connecticut Department of Labor, *Local Area Unemployment Statistics Report* (2013)
- Connecticut Department of Revenue Services, *2012 Individual Income Tax* (2012)
- Connecticut Voices for Children, *The Limits of Data on Free and Reduced Price Meal Eligibility in Connecticut* (2012)
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SHELTON

Population: 39,641 | Households: 15,019

HOUSING



16% Renters
2,356 households

84% Homeowners
12,663 households

40% of renters and 37% of homeowners are housing burdened, meaning that their monthly housing costs are at least 30% of their income

FOOD ASSISTANCE

15% of students eligible for
Free and Reduced Lunch

630 students receive free lunches, and 214 students receive reduced price lunch

1,758 receive SNAP benefits

12% of households

192 receive WIC assistance (monthly average)

1% of households

INCOME

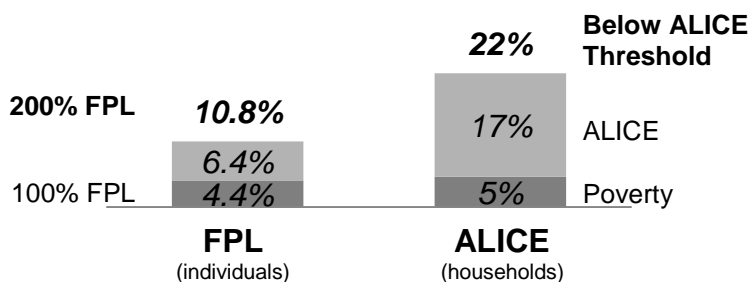
\$102,459 median family income

Unemployment **7.0%**

1,231 EITC claims (2012)

HOUSEHOLDS IN NEED

Measured by Federal Poverty Level and ALICE



2-1-1 CALL STATISTICS

Top 20 Service Requests (2013) # Requests

Public Assistance Programs	524
Housing/Shelter	313
Outpatient Mental Health Care	230
Utilities/Heat	229
Financial Assistance	174
Information Services	159
Legal Services	136
Food	103
Health Supportive Services	100
Substance Abuse Services	87
Benefits Screening	66
Individual and Family Support Services	64
Transportation	56
Tax Organizations and Services	31
Disaster Services	29
Community Services	26
Employment and Training Programs	26
Personal/Household Goods	26
Legal Assistance	24
Social Insurance Programs	23

TRANSPORTATION

751 households have no vehicle
5% of all households



Sources:

- 2012 American Community Survey (5 year estimates)
- Connecticut Department of Labor, *Local Area Unemployment Statistics Report* (2013)
- Connecticut Department of Revenue Services, *2012 Individual Income Tax* (2012)
- Connecticut Voices for Children, *The Limits of Data on Free and Reduced Price Meal Eligibility in Connecticut* (2012)
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