# Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit

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## Abstract

This report provides a toolkit of standardized measurement tools for assessing various aspects of community food security. It includes a general guide to community assessment and focused materials for examining six basic assessment components related to community food security. These include guides for profiling general community characteristics and community food resources as well as materials for assessing household food security, food resource accessibility, food availability and affordability, and community food production resources. Data collection tools include secondary data sources, focus group guides, and a food store survey instrument. The toolkit was developed through a collaborative process that was initiated at the community Food Security Assessment Conference sponsored by ERS in June 1999. It is designed for use by community-based nonprofit organizations and business groups, local government officials, private citizens, and community planners.

**Keywords:** Community food security, community assessment, hunger, food assistance programs, emergency food providers, food store access, food affordability, Thrifty Food Plan, community-supported agriculture.

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# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Overview of food insecurity and hunger in the United States

Many U.S. families struggle to meet their basic food needs despite continued economic expansion and a strong national nutrition safety net. A recent U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) study estimated that 10.1 percent of U.S. households—about 9 million households during 1999—were food insecure; that is, they did not have access at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life, with no need for recourse to emergency food sources or other extraordinary coping behaviors to meet their basic food needs. Included among those were 2.8 percent of households in which food insecurity reached levels of severity great enough that one or more household members were hungry at least some time during the year due to inadequate resources for food.

Beyond obvious moral considerations, food insecurity and hunger of this magnitude imply public health and economic costs to both communities and individuals through reduced cognitive development and learning capacity in children, impaired work performance and earnings potential in adults, and lower intake of food energy and key nutrients leading to increased medical costs, disability, and premature death due to diet-related illnesses.

Socioeconomic and demographic factors, including household size, homeownership, educational attainment, savings rates, and access to credit and health insurance, have been shown to be other important determinants of food security, independent of household income. For such households, food spending is often the most flexible item in the family budget and the first to get cut when unexpected changes in income occur, such as job loss or medical expenses.

In recent years, researchers, policymakers, and advocates for the poor have suggested that food insecurity and hunger are also factors of the broader social, economic, and institutional characteristics of the communities in which they occur. Of particular concern are those factors that affect the availability, accessibility, and affordability of food, such as the size and proximity of retail food stores, the variety, quality, and price of food available for purchase, the availability and adequacy of public transportation systems that support food access, and the viability and sustainability of local food production and marketing infrastructures.

Recent legislative changes associated with welfare reform and dramatic shifts in Federal farm supports have created a policy environment conducive to community-based initiatives that improve food access for low-income households and support rural communities by strengthening traditional ties between farmers and urban consumers. Funding for community food projects included in the 1996 Farm Bill and the launching of a nationwide Community Food Security Initiative by the Secretary of Agriculture in February 1999 have increased interest in developing tools that can be used to assess key components of a food secure community.

## 1.2 What is household food security?

The Ten-Year Comprehensive Plan for the National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Program, part of the National Nutrition and Related Research Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-445n 1990), directed the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services to define and measure food security and hunger as part of a comprehensive effort to monitor the dietary health and nutritional status of the U.S. population.

The food security measurement and instrument were developed over several years as part of the Federal Food Security Measurement Project, an ongoing collaboration among Federal agencies, academic researchers, and commercial and nonprofit private organizations. Key to the success of the new measurement effort was the adoption and standardization of a conceptual definition of the three terms that had been developed by the Life Sciences Research Office (LSRO) of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology. (See box 1.)

## 1.3 What is community food security?

Community food security is a relatively new concept with no universally accepted definition. For some purposes, community food security can be viewed as an expansion of the concept of household food security. Whereas household food security is concerned with the ability to acquire food at the household level, community food security concerns the underlying social, economic, and institutional factors within a community that affect the quantity and quality of available food and its affordability or price relative to the sufficiency of financial resources available to acquire it. For more information, see Linda S. Kantor. "Community Food

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**Box 1**
**What is Household Food Security? Definitions From the Life Sciences Research Office**

**Food security**—Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum

❖ The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.
❖ An assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

**Food insecurity**—Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

**Hunger**—The uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food. The recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food.

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Security Programs Improve Food Access," *Food Review,* 2001.

Communities may be considered to be food insecure if

- There are inadequate resources from which people can purchase foods.
- The available food purchasing resources are not accessible to all community members.
- The food available through the resources is not sufficient in quantity or variety.
- The food available is not competitively priced and thus is not affordable to all households.
- There are inadequate food assistance resources to help low-income people purchase foods at retail markets.
- There are no local food production resources.
- Locally produced food is not available to community members.

- There is no support for local food production resources.
- There is any significant household food insecurity within the community.

Policies and programs implemented to improve community food security address a diverse range of issues, including participation in and access to Federal food assistance programs, economic opportunity and job security, community development and social cohesion, ecologically sustainable agricultural production, farmland preservation, economic viability of rural communities, direct food marketing, diet-related health problems, and emergency food assistance access. Some examples include the following:

- **Food stamp outreach programs** that help increase the number of eligible households that participate in the Food Stamp Program.
- **Farmers' markets** that boost incomes of small, local farmers and increase consumers' access to fresh produce.
- **Community gardens** that help public housing residents and other low-income consumers supplement their diets with home-grown produce.
- **Asset development programs** that assist low-income families to accumulate funds for obtaining additional education, purchasing a home, or starting a business.
- **Food-buying cooperatives** that help families save money by pooling food purchases.
- **Community-supported agriculture programs** that can help provide small farmers with economic stability and consumers with high-quality produce, often at below retail prices.
- **Farm-to-school initiatives** that help local farmers sell fresh fruits and vegetables directly to school meals programs.
- **Community kitchens** that provide job training to the unemployed while converting surplus food to meals for the needy.

When implemented together with a strong Federal nutrition safety net and emergency food assistance programs that alleviate food insecurity and hunger over the short-term, such community food security initiatives may, over the long term, increase the economic resources available to households to purchase food; strengthen local capacity for food production, processing, and marketing; and boost the effectiveness of Federal food assistance and education programs by increasing the availability of high-quality, affordable food within a community.

In this sense, community food security is most easily understood as a continuum. Communities are unlikely to be either entirely "food secure" or entirely "food insecure." Rather, they can be placed on a continuum where the goal is to move from less food secure to more food secure. Ultimately, the end goal is a "food secure" community in which "all people in a community have access to a culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through non-emergency (or conventional) food sources at all times"(D. Biehler et al. *Getting Food on the Table: An Action Guide to Local Food Policy*, 1999).

## 1.4 Purpose and overview of the *Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit*

The purpose of the toolkit is to provide a standardized set of measurement tools for assessing various indicators of community food security. It was developed by the USDA as a resource for community-based nonprofit organizations and business groups, local government officials, private citizens, and community planners. It marks the latest phase of a new community-focused chapter in USDA's ongoing efforts to improve our knowledge about the nature and magnitude of

hunger and food insecurity in the United States.

As part of this effort USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS), in conjunction with the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, the Food and Nutrition Service, held a Community Food Security Assessment Conference in June 1999. The goal of the conference was to guide the development and implementation of community food security measurement tools.

The meeting was attended by an interdisciplinary group of academics and community practitioners from Government, universities, research institutes, and nonprofit organizations. Although their areas of expertise were diverse—including community gardening, urban transportation policy, farmland preservation, food marketing, hunger prevention, and nutrition assistance—the group worked to identify methods for measuring a community's ability to ensure that all of its members have access to enough food for an active, healthy life. The *Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit* was developed with the guidance of the meeting participants.

Subsequent development of the toolkit benefited from a collaboration with the Community Assessment Working Group of USDA's Lower Mississippi Delta Nutrition Intervention Research Initiative. Some of the tools and instruments were field-tested in Drew County, Arkansas, by the Center for Applied Research and Evaluation at the Arkansas Children's Hospital Research Institute. An orientation workshop sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-Extension office was held to orient potential toolkit users from several Wisconsin and Illinois communities and solicit their feedback on the toolkit's usefulness.

It is not our intention in the toolkit to reinvent the wheel. The toolkit is a product of the energy and enthusiasm of the conference

attendees, but it also reflects the dedicated work of assessment studies conducted in countless cities and counties across the Nation, as well as how-to manuals created by other researchers. (See chapter 12, An Annotated Bibliography of Community Food Security Assessment Studies.)

The goal is to help you plan and carry out a community food security assessment process that does not rely on professionals but allows you to include a wide variety of participants. You are guided to look at all resources to understand the community's potential not only for identifying an issue but also for addressing it successfully.

We have tried to do a great deal of the legwork for you by identifying sources of data that can be used in your assessment. The tools themselves are divided into separate units that can be used independently of one another. We recognize that food security issues differ by community and the combination of tools needed for an assessment in one community may be very different from that needed in another.

The toolkit provides tips, guidelines, and data collection tools for conducting a food security assessment of your community. To accomplish this task, we provide you with a general guide to community assessment—from planning to analysis stages. This guide can be used to familiarize all members of the community food security assessment team with the key components of the community assessment process. The next stage of the process focuses on community food security assessment. These chapters of the toolkit begin with an explanation of the elements of community food security and how they can be measured and analyzed. Then you are provided with a cross-reference between the indicators or data needed for the assessment and the corresponding assessment tools and guides. Appendices A and B include the necessary data collection tools (tables,

surveys, and focus group guides) and instructions on how to use each tool to collect data. These data collection instruments, including a food store survey in appendix C, can be customized to include any of the variables presented in the toolkit or any additional variables. There are six basic assessment components:

- Profile of community socioeconomic and demographic characteristics
- Profile of community food resources
- Assessment of household food security
- Assessment of food resource accessibility
- Assessment of food availability and affordability
- Assessment of community food production resources

# 2. Overview of the Assessment Process: Steps for Getting Started

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# 2. Overview of the Assessment Process: Steps for Getting Started

## 2.1 What is a community food security assessment?

**What is Community Assessment?**

Have you ever wondered how to solve a problem in your community? What could be done to build a stronger, healthier community? A community assessment helps community members to address their needs by using their own resources in a systematic way to identify resources, needs, and specific challenges or problems. The word "community" is key to the process. It is a process led and implemented by community members, to achieve a community goal. Typically, the community will gain not only from the information collected but also from the assessment process. By integrating people from different parts of the community into the team and developing a joint agenda and a resulting action plan, the community's bonds are tightened.

The goal of the assessment is to collect information to identify gaps and needs in the community and the resources, services, and systems that could be used to fill the gaps and meet the needs of residents. To accomplish this, you will gather information that helps you understand the following:

- Status of community residents
- Availability of community resources
- Capacity of community resources

This information can be collated and presented to inform community residents and business, civic, and government leaders of the need for changes and how they can be accomplished. The information will provide the basis for a well-constructed action plan that reflects the community's goals, resources, and needs.

**What is a Community Food Security Assessment?**

A community food security (CFS) assessment is a unique type of community assessment. It includes the collection of various types of data to provide answers to questions about the ability of existing community resources to provide sufficient and nutritionally sound amounts of culturally acceptable foods to households in the community. The result of the assessment is the generation of a community profile that may highlight the negative and positive components of the community's efforts to satisfy households' food needs.

According to the Community Food Security Coalition, components of CFS needs assessments include information on access to food; hunger, nutrition, and local agriculture data; an inventory of community food resources; and policy perspectives (H. Joseph, ed. *Community Food Security: A Guide to Concept, Design, and Implementation*, 1997).

These components can include factors such as the following:

- Effectiveness of local infrastructure for delivering Federal food assistance programs.
- Adequacy of supermarkets, barriers to food shopping, modes of transportation, selection and price, and local markets.
- Income levels and number of persons in poverty, use of the emergency food system, and Federal food assistance programs.
- Loss of farmland, farm startups, use of sustainable production methods, and availability of locally grown food in local stores.

- Number of community gardens, home gardens, farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture programs; food co-ops or other alternative food production/distribution arrangements; and open space available for food production.
- Scope of food policies affecting the community and evidence of integration of food-related issues into the local planning process.

## 2.2 Why conduct a community food security assessment?

Although the Federal nutrition safety net and agricultural policies play a key role in household and community food security, many decisions that affect a community's food security are made at the local level, such as funding allocations, types of programs or outreach, who to target, and so on.

Although still a small part of the decision-making process, increasing emphasis is being placed on the importance of objective, data-based information as a basis for policy or programming decisions. With tight budgets and many competing priorities, programs increasingly are being required to document the needs to which they are responding and the extent to which they are effective in addressing those needs.

This means that local professionals and other community members may have an important role to play in supporting effective policy and programming decisions regarding food security issues in their community. (See box 2.)

The key to community food security assessment is that it integrates information from a variety of sources about food security issues in a community. In an ideal assessment, information about individual components of community food security would be coordinated into a comprehensive picture of the food security situation in a community for local decision-makers.

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**Box 2**
**Community Food Security**
**Decision-Making**

Examples of decisions by local policymakers that may affect a community's food security:

- ❖ Whether the local school district should participate in the Federal School Breakfast Program
- ❖ Expanding office hours for Federal food assistance programs such as food stamps and WIC
- ❖ Zoning or allocating space for community gardens
- ❖ Developing noise and nuisance ordinances that do not unnecessarily discourage local agricultural production

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A community food assessment will help you to (1) understand local food systems, (2) inform the setting of goals to improve these local food systems, (3) inform decision-making about policies and actions to improve community food security; and (4) establish a long-term monitoring system with a clear set of indicators. This last point is important if as a Nation we will ever decide to compare communities with respect to food security. The indicators included in this toolkit represent a first attempt at defining a unified set of indicators that could be used across communities.

We suggest that as users of the toolkit, you adapt the instruments to include the indicators most relevant for your community with additions or deletions of specific indicators or assessment tools.

## 2.3 Determining your community's information needs

The purpose of community food security assessment is to facilitate decision-making about programs and policies that affect food security in your community, not simply to collect data. The process of data collection can be very costly and time intensive. It needs to be based on a plan that focuses on the efficient use of personnel and other resources and should be driven by a clear conception of how the information will be used. Therefore, before embarking on data collection, it is important to identify key questions, to determine the types of information and analysis needed to answer those questions, and to identify potential users of your findings. You may want to answer the following potential key questions:

- What are the geographic boundaries of the community that you are planning to study?
- Is household food insecurity a problem within the community, and who is at highest risk?
- How many people use Federal food assistance programs?
- Does the community have the necessary infrastructure to effectively deliver Federal food assistance programs at the local level?
- Do all people in the community have reasonable access to retail food outlets?
- Are there sufficient resources available to meet the needs of people who need emergency or supplemental food?
- What types of agricultural resources exist in the community?
- Are locally grown foods available in the community's retail food stores or food service outlets?
- Are there local policies and ordinances that affect the community's food

security (e.g., policies regarding the use of municipally owned land for community gardens)?

To help answer these and other questions that may be unique to your community and to plan a timely and cost-efficient community food security assessment, it will be necessary to form a diverse team of community members to plan and oversee assessment activities. The next section provides some guidelines to be used in selecting the team members and in developing an assessment plan.

For additional insight into the planning and team development process needed for a community food security assessment, you can consult the Community Food Security Coalition's *Getting Food on the Table: An Action Guide to Local Food Policy* by Dawn Biehler, Andy Fisher, Kai Siedenburg, Mark Winne, and Jill Zachary and *Community Food Security: A Guide to Concept, Design, and Implementation* by Hugh Joseph.

## 2.4 Creating a community food security assessment team

One of the features that distinguishes a community food security assessment from other research done on a community is that a community food security assessment is envisioned, planned, conducted, and used by people living and working in the community.

Diverse representation in the planning process is key to a successful outcome. The involvement of individuals from different parts of the community may increase access to data; for example, a representative from the local food pantry may have unique knowledge of and access to data on emergency food use in the community.

Once involved in the planning phase, people will be more likely to involve their constituencies in the assessment process itself and also will better understand and use the

results to inform policies and programs related to community food security issues.

A diverse team of 8 to 12 people is ideal for planning and implementing a comprehensive community food security assessment. Ideally, the team should consist of professionals and others in the community who have a common interest in community food security and who have different areas of expertise. The team also should include community residents who have direct experience with food security issues. Here are some examples of people to recruit for the assessment team:

- Local government representatives
- Representatives from community-based organizations (religious organizations, emergency food providers, social/neighborhood groups)
- Health, education, and nutrition providers
- Food retailers and manufacturers
- Community residents
- Farmers

In addition, it would be helpful to have members who are

- People with strong leadership and planning skills
- Local research resources familiar with data collection and analysis (universities, businesses, or nonprofit organizations that are involved in assessment activities)
- People with good oral and written communication skills

The team-building process may be facilitated by identifying key members of each of the desired participating sectors and gaining their trust and buy-in initially. These are the people who are most likely to participate willingly and who can involve other groups of people in the process as well.

Although the initiators of the assessment process may be very enthusiastic about the project, others may need to be convinced to participate. When recruiting potential team members, be prepared to describe the following factors:

- The importance of the assessment to the community and its members
- How each member can contribute to the process regardless of his or her research skills or food security knowledge
- What the planning team will be doing to conduct the assessment and the time commitment involved
- How the results could be used throughout the community

## 2.5  The planning process

Once an initial assessment team is assembled, the first meeting should be used to outline the initiative and explain possible roles for team members. This first meeting also should be used to determine the need for additional members and a recruitment strategy.

It is important to keep in mind that although you want to present the overall goal of the assessment, be sure not to have the entire process, or all of the goals and objectives, firmly established before this first planning meeting. Remember that the most successful effort will be achieved by involving all team members in the development of goals and objectives. Your role is to facilitate the team through the assessment process, ensuring that it gains "ownership" of the final product.

Some factors to think about include the following:

- Key food security issues in your community
- Key policies that may affect community food security
- Programming or policy decisions that may be needed on these issues

- Key local leaders who make policy and programming decisions
- Data and information needed to inform programming and policy decisions
- Deadline for completion of the food security assessment
- Methods to disseminate the information

Since it will not be possible to include all key community members on the assessment team, the team may find it useful to gather together a group of key community informants to explore the main issues and perceptions regarding food security in your community. The key informant discussion guide in appendix B provides guidance for conducting a group discussion.

# 3. Data Collection and Analysis Guide: Deciding What Data To Collect

# 3. Data Collection and Analysis Guide: Deciding What Data To Collect

## 3.1 Finding and using data

The previous chapters discuss how to plan a community food security assessment, how to identify key questions to consider before embarking on data collection, and what the basic components of a community food security assessment are. This chapter gives you a general overview of the different types of data and data collection methods you may use to conduct your assessment.

Data can be found and presented in many forms. They are used to tell a story. *Quantitative data*, for example, can help describe the extent of a problem by providing information in precise amounts:

"Ten percent of all single-parent households headed by someone under 20 years of age have experienced food insecurity in Alacaster County in the past year."

*Qualitative data* provide a descriptive account of a situation:

"Food-insecure households in Alacaster County reported using strategies such as community gardening, neighborhood group meals, and borrowing food from neighbors and family members to help them cope with food security problems."

Both *qualitative* and *quantitative* data provide valid information if collected systematically. This toolkit can help you with this task.

### Existing Data

There are two basic types of data—*existing* and *original*. Existing data are data that have already been collected. They may be either *compiled* or *uncompiled*. Examples of compiled existing data include county-level poverty numbers published by the U.S. Census Bureau. However, community or State agencies often collect numerous pieces of useful information that may not be aggregated and summarized. This is known as existing uncompiled data. Examples of existing uncompiled data may include the number of households served by a local food pantry or the number of emergency food providers in the community. (See box 3.)

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**Box 3**
**Data Versus Information**
From *Monitoring the Nutrition of Your Community: A "How-To" Manual*

*Data* are raw numbers of values and usually are not very meaningful until they are analyzed and interpreted to become *information*. For example, the percentage of households suffering from food insecurity in the community, especially compared with national or State averages, is information and says something about the relative magnitude and importance of the problem. The raw number of such households—or data—may be useful by itself but does not indicate how big the problem is relative to State or national norms.

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Both types of existing data will be potentially useful in conducting your community food security assessment. But whenever possible, you should use compiled data—they are easier to find and use fewer resources. When compiled data are not available and uncompiled data exist, you may be able to compile the data yourself or get assistance from the agency that collected and stores the data.

The decision to access existing data must be made carefully. (See box 4.) Before deciding to compile existing data, the following questions must be raised and answered by your assessment team members:

- What are the sources of the existing data?
- How suitable are the existing data for the current project?
- Who will be assigned the task of collecting the existing data?
- What resources must be set aside before the data are accessed (e.g., personnel, duplication fees, computer hardware and software, transportation costs)?
- Who must be contacted before a trip is made to an agency to request data?

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**Box 4**
**Using the Most Recent**
**Existing Data Available**

It is important to remember that when using existing data, it is always preferable to use the *most recent data available*. The first data source that you find may not contain the most recent data. For example, until data from the recent 2000 U.S. census is compiled and released, much of the most accessible existing socioeconomic and demographic data that you will find on your community will come from the 1990 census. In this case, you are strongly urged to investigate the possibility that more recent data may be available, for at least some indicators, at the local level.

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### Original Data

After your review of the available existing data, you may find that no appropriate existing data are available to answer some of the questions you want answered. In this case, you will have to collect new or *original* data. Examples of original data include data from community residents on household food security, data from farmers about their participation in farmers' markets, data on types and quantities of food distributed by food pantries, and data on the price and availability of food items from supermarkets or other food stores.

## 3.2  Data collection techniques

Several different methods are used for collecting original data. Three of the available methods are introduced in this toolkit. These methods include surveys, observation, and focus groups. Each method has strengths and weaknesses and is best used in specific situations. Included in this toolkit are guides on how to use the specific survey instruments, and we provide interview, focus group, and observation forms for your use. However, before reviewing the specific tools and guides, it is worthwhile to learn a bit more about each method. A short description of each is presented below.

### Surveys and Observation

*Surveys* are used to gather information consistently and accurately from large numbers of people. One key element in conducting a survey is to ensure the representativeness of the community. This element and other issues on sampling or selecting respondents are introduced later in this section and are discussed in detail as part of the instructions included with each of the different data collection instruments. A survey is a predetermined set of questions or indicators that are collected either by interview, written personal responses, or observation. The responses might be closed-ended or open-ended. Closed-ended questions include multiple-choice questions or scales used for ranking priorities or preferences. Open-ended questions provide space for the respondent or observer to answer the question freely without any cues or categories.

As noted, surveys can be used to collect data through *observation*. One example is the observation of users of a particular resource or program and noting facts such as their gender, ethnic or racial characteristics, and time of use. Another example, and the one used in the Food Store Survey included in this toolkit, is the observation of information

readily available without reviewing records or aggregated data. The Food Store Survey includes the observation of food availability and prices.

Observation is conducted using an observation guide or survey instrument. The guide or instrument provides space for recording information accurately and consistently. It serves to ensure that all information is captured in the format required.

Although observation does not require direct interaction with people, it is important to request permission from the resource or program at which the observation will occur. In addition, observers should be discreet and as invisible as possible so as not to interfere with normal resource activity or to bias the activities being recorded.

**Focus Groups**

*Focus groups* are a data collection method used for studying ideas in a group context. Unlike surveys, in which the researcher asks a question and the respondent answers, focus group techniques rely on interaction within the group, based on topics supplied by the researcher.

The people invited to participate in a focus group should be selected with care. For best results, the group should be limited to between 8 and 12 people. Focus group participants should always have some connection with the topic being discussed and should be a relatively homogeneous group. For example, if the discussion will revolve around farmers' use and experiences with local farmers' markets, most of the participants should be farmers who have the opportunity to participate in these efforts. However, it also may be useful to include farmers who have the opportunity to participate but choose not to do so.

Since it is also important that participants be representative of the various subgroups within the targeted population, it is common to conduct a set of focus groups with different segments or subgroups of the targeted population. For example, if a focus group were to be conducted on residents' experiences with food security, groups might be separated by household type—households without children, households with children, and households with elderly members. Within each group would be people representing the different ethnic or racial groups living in the community. If the community is spread over a large geographic area, different groups might be conducted with participants in different community locations. This diversity will ensure that the information collected in the focus groups will represent the diversity within the targeted population.

*Screeners* can be used to help with the selection process. A screener is a set of questions that categorize the population groups you wish to include in your focus group. For example, if the group is to include people from a mix of ethnic groups and income levels and only those who participate in food assistance programs, you might ask people about their ethnic/racial identity, income, and participation in USDA food assistance programs. A screener is typically very short and also is used to provide the potential participant with information about the purpose of the focus group.

Focus groups are conducted by a facilitator using a focus group guide. A *focus group guide* typically includes questions that are open-ended and will provoke discussion among the participants. There is never a right or wrong answer, and all participants are encouraged to recount their experiences or to present their points of view without criticism or comment from the group. In addition to the facilitator, a person should observe the group taking notes and should tape-record the discussion. The role of the recorder includes observing the dynamics of the group and the unspoken expressions displayed by

participants. Sometimes focus groups incorporate a short written survey. This survey can be used in the beginning to slowly introduce the topic of interest while also collecting specific person-level information. After the session is concluded, the recorder prepares a summary of the group discussion and unspoken observations (See Appendix B: Focus Group Guides and Materials).

## 3.3 Beginning the data collection process

**Finding and Training Data Collectors**

Ideally, you should have several people available to collect the data. The actual decision on how many to assign to this task will depend on the resources that you have available, the previous experience of the team members, and members' desire and ability to collect data.

Once you have determined how many people are available for data collection tasks, you may want to determine which staff members are best suited to the collection of existing data and which are best suited to the collection of original data, each of which places unique requirements on the data

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**Box 5**
**What Makes a Good Data Collector?**

| The collector of existing data should be | The collector of original data from people should be |
|---|---|
| — Detail oriented | — Amiable |
| — Persistent | — Fond of people |
| — Computer literate | — Multilingual |
| — Goal oriented | — A keen listener |
| | — An unbiased listener |
| | — Observant |

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collector. In box 5, we list *some* of the qualities that we view to be important in each type of data collector.

Each person selected to collect data must receive training before beginning the task. The training should be of sufficient length to prepare the individual for his or her role in the assessment and to ensure the individual's level of comfort. It is difficult to quantify the time required for training because of the differences in individuals' past experience with data collection, educational levels, and attitudes toward the importance (and sanctity) of research.

What will be included in the training? The individual must be allowed to become acquainted with the survey forms and tables and must have some hands-on experience in completing them. To provide you with some guidance on planning the training session, we have listed some of the activities that might be included.

**Training Session Activities**

- Introduce data collectors to each other and describe the role of the data collection process in profiling community food security.
- Encourage data collectors to review all data collection forms to gain an understanding of the relationship of each form to the outcome of the assessment.
- Make assignments for the collection of data.
- Allow data collectors the opportunity to review the forms for which they are responsible.
- Encourage survey data collectors to administer the forms to one another. For those assigned to the task of completing data tables, encourage individuals to access data from some suggested Internet sites or from available agency reports.
- As a group, review the completed forms and discuss ways to improve the data collection.
- Respond to questions and concerns raised by the group.

**Note:** Training should not be considered complete until trainees actually have the opportunity to use the data collection tools in a simulated practice session.

**Selecting Respondents**

Sampling is a technique that is commonly used in social science research before the collection of data. It allows the researcher to save time and money by limiting the number of programs or participants who must be interviewed or observed during data collection.

This does not mean that you are allowed to pick and choose among available participants to arrive at a workable number. Rather, when drawing a sample, you will follow a series of steps to select a sufficient number of potential respondents to represent all available respondents. Thus, your sample will be a *representative sample* of the available population, allowing you to draw conclusions that may be extended to the entire community.

The strategy of selecting a representative sample and devoting resources to obtaining data from as many respondents in that sample as possible produces results that are superior to a half-hearted attempt to include everyone. In other words, a 75 percent response from a random sample of 100 is better than a 25 percent response from a population of 1,000.

There are several ways to create a sample. In the largest of studies, such as those conducted on a national basis, researchers often rely on special computer software to draw samples of respondents who will represent specific characteristics of the population. In smaller studies, researchers will consult a *Table of Random Numbers*.

Specific instructions for selecting a sample and determining sampling size are given as needed with the data collection tools listed in section 5.3 and included in appendix A.

## 3.4 Analyzing and interpreting the data

Once the data are collected, they will be analyzed and used to develop a general picture of community food security. This section presents an overall discussion of the types of analytic approaches that can be used with a community food security assessment.

The analytic approach used will reflect the purpose of the assessment. For example, if the goal is to understand how the community compares with the Nation, the analysis will focus on comparisons with national standards. If the key is to develop an action plan, the analysis and presentation will be community specific and will use graphic display. If the purpose is to develop a baseline of information, then a spreadsheet compilation may be all that is required.

The analysis will be both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative analysis will focus on measuring specific profiles of community characteristics, whereas the qualitative analysis will be used to describe some of the community dynamics. Qualitative analyses will use information collected through focus groups and other interviews.

Presenting the results of a community assessment to parties involved in the assessment process, key policymakers, and the broader public is an integral part of the process. Given the variety of audiences interested in the results, the presentation should be easy to understand. Thus graphic displays, maps, and tables should be used to present the data whenever possible.

**Statistical Profiling**

A statistical profile of the community uses the data collected to describe various community aspects. These include the demographic, socioeconomic, and food security characteristics of community residents as well as the availability, accessibility, and

utilization of food-related resources and programs. Statistical profiles can be one-dimensional, presenting information for the whole community, or multidimensional, presenting data for the whole community as well as for its various subgroups. Statistical profiles can be based on percentages or raw numbers. The selection of the type of statistic to be used in a profile will depend on how information is available through existing sources, the size of the population being described, and the intended use of the data.

An example of statistical profiling is provided below using data from Drew County, Arkansas (table 1). A statistical description of the demographics of the population was developed by collecting information from the Census Bureau's Internet site [http://factfinder.census.gov]. (Unfortunately, at the time of printing, data from the 2000 census was not yet available for Arkansas). These data were then entered into the table format that is included in appendix A as table 2.

**Table 1. Demographic Profile of Drew County, Arkansas (1990 census data)**

| Demographic Characteristic | Census Data Table | Number |
|---|---|---|
| **Total Population** | DP-1 | 17,369 |
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | DP-1 | 8,350 |
| Female | DP-1 | 9,019 |
| **Household Structure** | | |
| Total households | DP-1 | 6,342 |
| Persons per household | DP-1 | 2.63 |
| **Family Households** | | 4,699 |
| Married-couple families | DP-1 | 3,641 |
| Other family, male householder | DP-1 | 196 |
| Other family, female householder | DP-1 | 862 |
| **Nonfamily Households** | | 1,643 |
| Householder living alone | DP-1 | 1,500 |
| Householder 65 years and over | DP-1 | 770 |
| **Race/Ethnicity** | | |
| White | DP-1 | 12,530 |
| African American | DP-1 | 4,754 |
| American Indian | DP-1 | 27 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | DP-1 | 23 |
| Other | DP-1 | 35 |
| Hispanic origin (of any race) | DP-1 | 92 |
| **Age** | | |
| < 5 years | DP-1 | 1,214 |
| 5–17 years | DP-1 | 3,615 |
| 18–20 years | DP-1 | 1,086 |
| 21–24 years | DP-1 | 1,079 |
| 25–44 years | DP-1 | 4,852 |
| 45–54 years | DP-1 | 1,744 |
| 55–59 years | DP-1 | 734 |
| 60–64 years | DP-1 | 699 |
| 65–74 years | DP-1 | 1,238 |
| 75–84 years | DP-1 | 861 |
| 85 years and over | DP-1 | 247 |

## Presenting the data

Once a statistical profile is complete the data can be presented in a variety of formats. The format chosen should reflect the intended purpose of the presentation. The following figures present a description of the population of Drew County by age. Figure 1 uses a bar graph to show comparisons of the number of people in each age group.

**Figure 1: Age profile of Drew County, Arkansas**
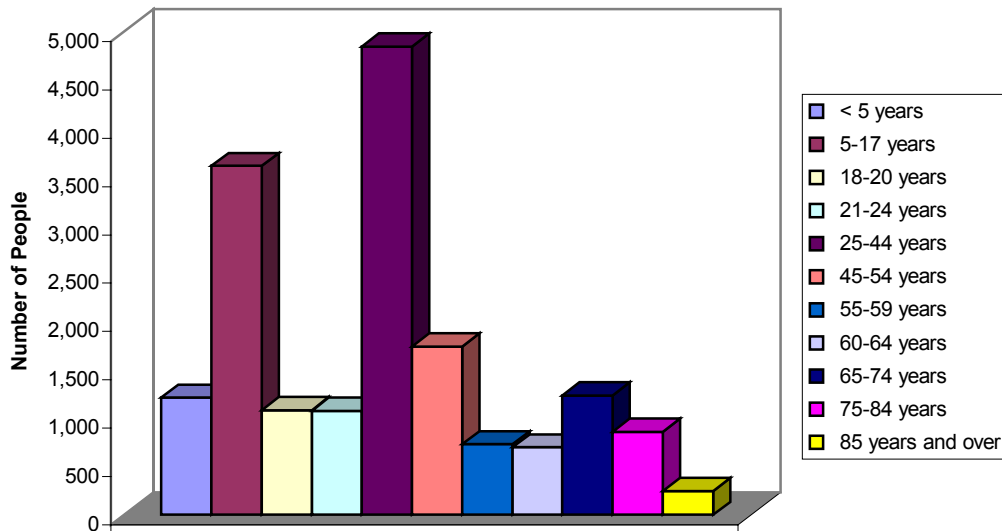


Figure 2 uses a pie chart to present the relative proportions of different age groups within the population.

**Figure 2: Age profile of Drew County, Arkansas**
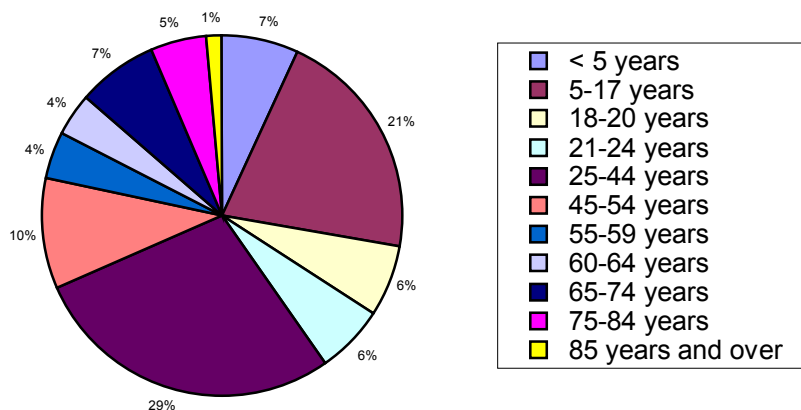
**Comparative Analysis**

To understand how your community compares with national standards or those of similar communities, you may want to do some comparative analyses. The first step is to compare data collected and prepared in the statistical profile with recognized standards. This task will be easier in some instances than others. Comparative statistics for national, State, or county data can be found from several sources. Demographic data can be found on the Census Bureau's Web site. Other data can be found through published papers and reports available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, other Federal Government agencies, local government agencies, and related organizations.

National databases, such as Census Bureau databases, will have similar data available for the U.S. population as a whole. Often they also will have State data available. Although data will be available from other communities, comparisons across communities can be tricky. Communities differ greatly in size and general characteristics. If cross-community comparisons are desired, it is wise to consult with a statistician or research analyst who can help you identify appropriate communities with which to compare your results.

Comparisons also can be done over time. If you repeat your assessment on a regular basis, you can compare the results over time to mark your progress. Descriptive analysis of community factors such as policy, economic and political changes will be necessary to understand some of the underlying factors responsible for notable changes. For example, to understand how your community compares with the Nation with respect to poverty status, you can collect poverty data from the Census Bureau for both your county and the United States.

Figure 3 compares poverty data for Drew County, Arkansas with the U.S. national average.

**Figure 3:  Comparison of U.S. and Drew County Poverty Rates**
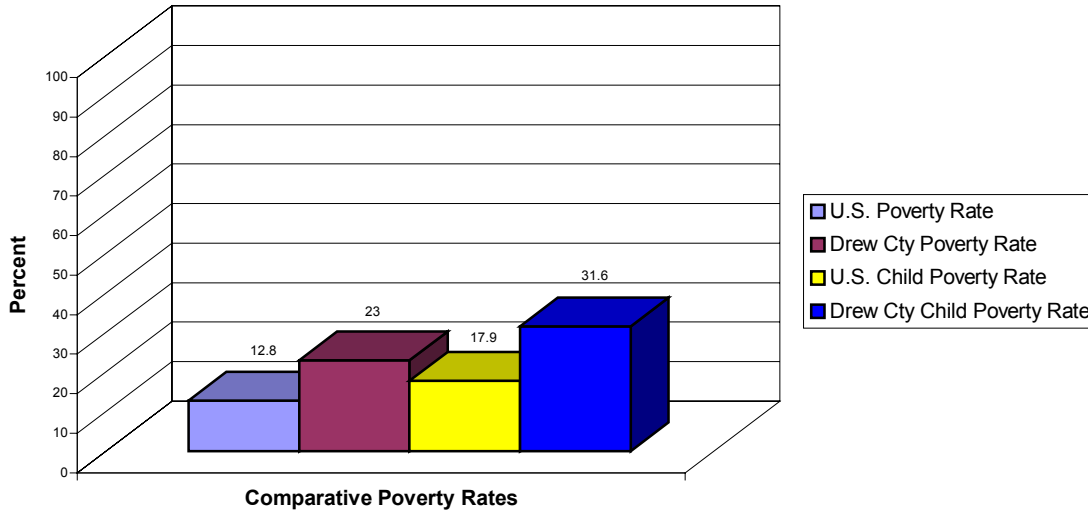


Data can also be presented narratively, as in the paragraphs in Box 6.

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**Box 6**

**Narrative Presentation of Comparative Data**

In Drew County, 4,025 of the population of 17,369 people (23 percent) live below the poverty level.  Of these, 1,493 are related children younger than 18 years of age.  Among all children in the county (4,728 children), this figure represents a child poverty rate of 31.6 percent.

Comparatively, in the United States, 31,742,864 people, or 12.8 percent of all people, live in poverty.  Of these, 11,161,836 are children.  This figure represents a poverty rate among children of 17.9 percent.

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**Community Mapping**

Community mapping is an age-old technique that we recall as a map with pins or flags attached indicating the location of specific places or characteristics. This method, now often applied using computer-generated maps and technology, superimposes data variables onto a picture of a geographic area for the purpose of examining geographic variation in the data. It allows a community to pinpoint particular problem areas to identify problems with access to resources or services. A community map may be useful in identifying a physical barrier that influences the use of resources. For example, a river may impact food accessibility if all stores are on one side of the river and there is no public transportation available to cross the bridge to the area with the greatest poverty rate. More simply, a map helps to display the availability of resources within the most affected areas of the community.

As the team conducts the community food security assessment, it will be useful to map all resources and services identified, including food stores, emergency food providers, farmers' markets, food cooperatives, and Government food assistance programs. To help you develop these maps, location information tables are included in the toolkit where addresses can be recorded. Additional information from the Census Bureau can be used to map various community and population characteristics. (See box 7.)

The map will draw attention to the need for specific services and/or resources and will help to identify areas in which few services are within easy access of the families who need them. The process of mapping community-based resources may reveal problems with certain community locations and may give insight into the best locations for creating new or expanded services. The mapping process begins with a baseline map.

Some computer-generated community or county maps are available from the Census Bureau. More sophisticated mapping programs are available in individual software packages (e.g., MapInfo) or on Web-based applications (e.g., Mapquest or Yellowpages.com). However, mapping can also be done without the use of computer programs. A community map should be available from the local Chamber of Commerce, police or fire departments, schools, and government agencies. Symbols can be placed on the map to indicate different community resources, and overlays or shading can be developed to present demographic and food security-related characteristics by location.

> **Box 7**
> **Developing Maps From Census Data**
>
> 1. Go to www.census.gov on the Web
> 2. Click on *American Factfinder* at the bottom of the left sidebar.
> 3. Click on *Thematic Maps*.
> 4. Click on "Change Selections."
> 5. Next to "Select the type of area," click on the arrow and select *County*.
> 6. Next to "Select State," click on the arrow and select your *State*.
> 7. A box will appear below "select geographic area" with the names of counties in your State. Select your *County*.
> 8. Click on *Show Map*.

Maps also can be used for displaying comparisons of a slightly different nature. You might choose to compare your county with another with respect to the number or distribution of people living in poverty or the number of grocery stores in the county. Using the Census Bureau's *American Factfinder* Web page, you can request maps that already have some of these data comparisons between counties within a State and throughout the

United States. Figure 4 shows poverty rates by county for the State of Arkansas.

**Figure 4: Percent of Persons Below the Poverty Level in 1989, Arkansas by County**



Percent of Persons Below the Poverty Level in 1989, Arkansas by County
Source: 1990 Decennial Census.

Prepared with American FactFinder.

Legend
Data Classes
Percent
9 - 17
17 - 23
23 - 30
30 - 48
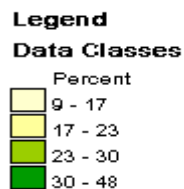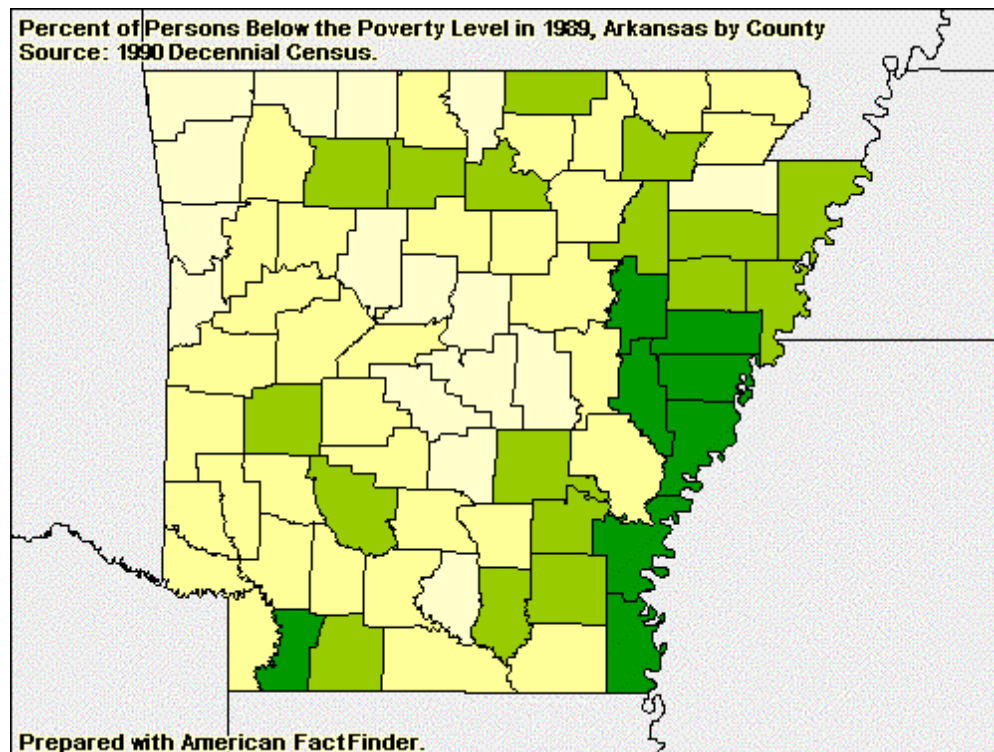
## Focus Group Analysis

Analyzing focus group data systematically requires that the discussion be recorded in a prescribed format. This task can be accomplished by creating a data-recording format that correlates directly to the relevant focus group guide. Each question should be situated on a separate page, and key phrases and comments indicating strong opinions, commonly held opinions, and issues that present the most diverse responses should be noted. Silences and notable reactions of the group should also be noted.

Before the data are analyzed, it can be useful to listen to the taped session since it is inevitable that some nuances will be missed during the session. Then, key findings should be summarized. These findings will include the issues discussed that most participants agree on or disagree on and the issues that created the most energetic discussion, represented a common experience, and so on. It may be helpful to use bullets to highlight the key points and to present a few direct quotations from the discussion that support your summarized point. If a series of focus

groups has been conducted, you can compare and compile the results.

Selected quotations recorded from a focus group session on food assistance programs are provided in Box 8 (questions 3 and 4 from the Moderator's Guide for a Focus Group on Household Food Assistance in appendix B):

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**Box 8**
**Sample Focus Group Analysis**

*What would you say are the best features of the food assistance programs you use? That is, what makes them really work for you? (Probe for staff attitude, location, easy access….)*

- I've been getting WIC coupons for my three children, and the people who work there are really like family. They know all of us and always give us good information on what to eat. They also help me figure out where I can get other help.
- I agree—WIC staff are great. They make going there to pick up the coupons very interesting. I always learn something new. It also helps that they are in the same building as my children's doctor. I like to just make one trip.
- Yes, I agree too. *(Everyone in the group nods in agreement.)* WIC staff make it easy to get the coupons, and the food is a real help to our family. The people where I go for my stamps aren't the same, but it's nice to have the choice with food stamps. *(Again, lots of agreement.)*
- I think food stamps are so important to my family. Without them I wouldn't be able to get enough food for my kids and me. And I like having a choice of foods I want to buy. Now that I get my food with a special card, I don't even feel badly when I go to the supermarket. *(Lots of excited talking about how happy people are to have the benefit card that looks like a credit card.)*

*What are some problems you have had when using or trying to use the food assistance programs?*

- I don't like having to go to the food stamp office. It always takes me a long time to get my business done, and the people there are not very nice and helpful. I have to take two buses, and I always miss one of them and end up waiting for a long time.
- Oh, I know what you mean. I used to have to take the bus. Now my neighbor has a car and she will let me know when she's going and I can go too. Without her it might not be worth it to go down there.
- Why can't they move the office to a better place? *(Unanimous agreement!)*
- Well, for me the hardest thing is knowing that I need help from anyone! I'm still embarrassed when I go to the store for food and have to use my food stamp card. People here know that's what it is. The other day someone actually stopped me and asked me if it was for food stamps. Can you believe it?
- *(Digression as everyone talked together about how embarrassing food stamps can be and how inconsiderate other people are of their feelings.)*

---

**Box 8**
**Sample Focus Group Analysis (continued)**

- A problem I have is that the foods that they tell me about in the WIC program are never available in my store, or they are so old I don't want to buy them. So then I have to pay someone to take me to the supermarket that has everything. But that takes me a long time to get to.

The following writeup would be used to summarize the discussion as presented above:

The group included 7 women and 5 men, all of whom had some current or past experience with food assistance programs. Of the 12 participants, 8 were white, 2 were African American, and 2 were Hispanic. In general, there were no differences noted by gender or race/ethnicity. People appreciate the value of the food assistance programs in helping to bring food into their homes. Features that enhance or detract from their experience with food assistance programs include staff attitudes, office location, availability of food in local stores, and stigma.

Some of the most important features of food assistance programs appear to be the following:

- Staff attitudes and willingness to help participants beyond handing them benefits
- Location of the program office
- Value of the food benefits for the family
- Having a choice of foods to purchase with the benefit
- Getting benefits in a way that doesn't stigmatize people

Participants were very vocal about the importance of the way that program staff treat them. The kindness and reinforcement received from staff at the WIC program were particularly noted by many, as summarized by one participant:

> *I've been getting WIC coupons for my three children, and the people*
> *who work there are really like family…they know all of us and always*
> *give us good information on what to eat. They also help me figure out*
> *where I can get other help.*

There was also great excitement when discussing the benefits of having a "food stamp credit card" and the problems associated with having other people know that you are receiving some type of food assistance.

> *Now that I get my food with a special card, I don't even feel badly*
> *when I go to the supermarket.*

*Well, for me the hardest thing is knowing that I need help from anyone! I'm still embarrassed when I go to the store for food and have to use my food stamp card. People here know that's what it is. The other day someone actually stopped me and asked me if it was for food stamps. Can you believe it?*

**Box 8**
**Sample Focus Group Analysis (continued)**

Other problems highlighted by the group include the following:

- Remote location of the food stamp office
- Negative staff attitudes
- Difficulty in getting to the office using public transportation
- Not having desirable food available in local stores

## 3.5 Basic components of a community food security assessment

Before deciding exactly what data to gather, it is important to know something about the types of data that can help describe the food security situation in your community and sources of data and their availability. It is also important to know the core components underlying a community food security assessment. The comprehensive community food security assessment described in this toolkit includes six basic components:

- Profile of community socioeconomic and demographic characteristics
- Profile of community food resources
- Assessment of household food security
- Assessment of food resource accessibility
- Assessment of food availability and affordability
- Assessment of community food production

After meeting with your assessment team to set goals for the assessment and gathering input from key informants in the community, you might decide that a comprehensive assessment is unnecessary or too expensive and find that you want to focus your efforts on one or more, but not all, of these components. The following sections provide you with background on each of the different assessment components and with the data collection and analysis tools. These tools are designed to stand alone so that your data collection and analyses process reflects the unique food security challenges facing your community.

These tools include the following:

- Table shells and detailed instructions for collecting compiled existing data, including retrieving data from the Internet and other sources. It also includes some suggestions for gathering existing uncompiled data from local agencies and others in your community. Sample table shells are available in appendix A.

- Focus group guides, recruitment flyers, screening guides, and survey instruments for key informant, household food security, food purchasing, food assistance program use, and community food production resources focus groups.

- A survey instrument for gathering data on the price and availability of foods at local food retailers.

# 4. Profile of Community Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics

► 4.1  Purpose

► 4.2  Analysis

► 4.3  Indicators

# 4. Profile of Community Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics

## 4.1  Purpose

The first step in the development of a community food security assessment is the gathering of information on the residents of that community. The questions guiding this part of the assessment include

- Who are the people in the community?
- What are their demographic characteristics?
- What is their economic status?

It is advisable to rely on existing data for the community profile. This will help you keep assessment costs low and will provide you with consistent data that can be used easily for comparative purposes. (See box 9.) Much of the data are available at the county and census tract or ZIP Code level, thus making it possible to create community characteristic maps as discussed in chapter 3.

### Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics

Demographic and socioeconomic data are some of the easiest to collect because they are assembled by Federal, State, or county agencies. Most are available free of charge on the Internet or in published form at your local library or State or county agency. Because these data have been systematically collected, they are almost always reliable and valid. See Appendix A for more specific information on how to collect these data.

## 4.2  Analysis

The analysis plan for the profile of community characteristics will focus on descriptive analyses, using tables and graphs to present the data. The most simple analysis will involve presenting the data as compiled

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**Box 9**
**Collecting Data on Trends Over Time and Comparisons With National and State Data**

Gathering data for demographic and socioeconomic indicators or other types of data allows you to describe changes in the data over time. Such *time series data* can be useful for putting data in context and showing how policy and environmental changes impact the phenomenon being measured.

For example, collecting data for multiple years on the percentage of people living in poverty may help assess the impact of existing policies on poverty. If detailed data are recorded on various potential influencing policies and factors (such as changes in welfare program regulations), it may be possible to identify associations between the changes in poverty rates and implemented policies.

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or using them in graphic displays. A more detailed analysis would include the comparison of characteristics to State or national standards, to prior levels, or to data collected in other assessment sections.

The intent of this profile is to gather information to be used for more complex or detailed analyses that are presented in the forthcoming assessment components. Thus, this analysis remains relatively simple and straightforward.

## 4.3  Indicators

The following table provides you with a cross reference for all indicators you will collect for a profile of community characteristics and the data collection tools available in appendix A

from which they can be compiled. A similar indicator index is included in each of the following chapters.

| Indicator | Appendix | Data Collection Tool |
|---|---|---|
| **Demographic Characteristics** | | |
| Total Population (Number) | A | Table 1 |
| Age | A | Table 1 |
| Race/Ethnicity | A | Table 1 |
| Citizenship | A | Table 1 |
| Household Structure | A | Table 1 |
| **Socioeconomic Characteristics** | | |
| Employment Status | A | Table 2 |
| Income | A | Table 2 |
| Poverty Status | A | Table 2 |

# 5. Profile of Community Food Resources

► 5.1  Purpose

► 5.2  Analysis

► 5.3  Indicators

# 5. Profile of Community Food Resources

## 5.1 Purpose

To understand the adequacy of community food resources, you must begin by creating a profile of all existing resources. The questions guiding this profile include:

- Are Federal food assistance programs available to help people purchase food?
- Are people in the community participating in food assistance programs?
- What resources are available in the community for purchasing food?
- Are emergency resources available in the event that residents do not have enough money to purchase food through normal channels?

This profile will help you understand how well equipped your community is to meet the food-related needs of its residents.

**Federal Food Assistance Program Resources**

Each year the U.S. Department of Agriculture spends billions of dollars to provide food assistance programs for low-income people. For these programs to reach those in need, local communities must have an infrastructure that can deliver food assistance benefits effectively. (The Federal food assistance programs are described in box 10).

**Federal Food Assistance Program Participation**

Data on participation in Federal food assistance and emergency assistance programs can be useful as a measure of the number of people or households in your community that may have difficulty meeting their food needs. However, such data must be interpreted with caution because the data may:

- Underestimate need when not everyone who needs a service or program uses it (e.g., by choice, lack of awareness, or eligibility).
- Overestimate need when counts are duplicated (e.g., the number of individuals who visit a specific emergency kitchen in any given month).

**Retail Resources for Food Purchases**

Access to supermarkets, grocery stores, and other food stores can affect significantly the quality and affordability of food available to consumers in your community, including the ability of low-income households to use Federal food assistance programs, such as WIC and the Food Stamp Program, that operate through retail markets. Other places to purchase food can complement traditional food retailers. For example, farmers' markets and food cooperatives can offer locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables and can provide substantial discounts. The data collected in this profile will provide you with details on the number, type, and location of all retail food resources, food cooperatives, and farmers' markets.

**Emergency Food Resources**

Alternative sources of food for people who may need additional crisis support are known as locally based emergency food providers. Emergency food providers include food pantries, soup kitchens, food banks, and other community-based food distribution programs. The information that you will need to collect will often be available through your local government offices and agencies; churches, synagogues, and community centers; or a special information hotline or outreach program that may exist in some communities.

## 5.2  Analysis

As with the profile of community characteristics, the presentation of data collected for a profile of community resources will be descriptive. Although the information can be presented on its own (using maps, charts, and graphs), for the most part, the information gathered as part of this profile will provide the basis for the other assessment components in this toolkit. For example, data on the number of food assistance program sites and participation levels can be used in the assessment of accessibility or availability. Thus, it is important that the profile use data that are as up to date as possible.

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**Box 10**
**Federal Food Assistance Programs: An Overview**

**Food Stamp Program**

The Food Stamp Program is the cornerstone of the USDA food assistance programs serves millions of Americans each day. Eligible participants receive benefits to purchase food at authorized food stores and farmers' markets. Restaurants and group feeding sites can be authorized to accept food stamps for meals provided to the homeless, elderly, and people with disabilities. Eligibility and benefits are based largely on household size, income, and assets. More information about the Food Stamp Program is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/fsp].

**National School Lunch Program**
The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) provides nutritious lunches to about 27 million children in 96,000 schools each school day. These lunches must meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and other nutrition standards. The NSLP provides cash and commodity support for meals served by public and private nonprofit elementary and secondary schools and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that opt to enroll and guarantee to offer free or reduced-price meals to eligible low-income children.

The NSLP operates as a three-tiered system. For children whose family incomes are below 130 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines, the meals are free. For children whose family income is between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty guidelines, the program restricts lunch costs to no more than 40 cents. The NSLP provides a small per meal subsidy for "full-price" meals for children who do not receive free or reduced-price meals. More than half of the lunches served in the NSLP are free or at reduced price. More information about the NSLP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch].

**School Breakfast Program**
The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is similar to the NSLP in that it provides for Federal cash and commodity support for meals served by public and private nonprofit elementary and secondary schools residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that opt to enroll and guarantee to offer free or reduced-price meals to eligible low-income children.

The program uses the three-tiered approach (described above) to ensuring that low-income children receive a free or reduced-cost breakfast as they arrive at school in the morning. Unlike the NSLP, the great majority (84 percent in FY 2000) of children enrolled in the program receive free or reduced-price meals. More than half of the children in the United States attend schools that offer the SBP. More information about the SBP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast].

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**Box 10**
**Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs: An Overview (continued)**

**Child and Adult Care Food Program**
The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides healthful meals and snacks for children and adults enrolled in a variety of day-care settings. The program reimburses participating day-care providers for serving meals that meet Federal guidelines. It operates in family or group day-care homes, child care centers, adult day-care centers for elderly and impaired adults, emergency shelters that provide meals to homeless children, and after-school programs that provide educational or enrichment activities. More information about the CACFP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Care/cafp].

**Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children**
The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program (SFSP) for Women, Infants, and Children (the WIC program) provides food assistance, nutrition risk screening, and related services (e.g., nutrition education and breastfeeding support) to low-income pregnant and postpartum women and their infants, as well as low-income children up to age 5. Participants in the program must have a family income at or below 185 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines and must be judged to be nutritionally at risk. Nutritional risk is defined as detectable abnormal nutritional conditions, documented nutrition-related medical conditions, health-impairing dietary deficiencies, or conditions that predispose people to inadequate nutrition or nutrition-related medical problems. More information about the WIC program is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/wic].

**Summer Food Service Program**
The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides free meals to children during school vacations in areas where at least half of the children are from households with incomes at or below 185 percent of the poverty guidelines. Any child in the operating area may participate without needing to pass an eligibility test. Local sponsors, who are reimbursed by USDA, operate the program. Sponsors may be schools, units of local government, public or nonprofit private residential camps, other nonprofit private organizations, and colleges or universities participating in the National Youth Sports Program. More information about the SFSP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer].

**The Emergency Food Assistance Program**
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) provides commodity foods to States for distribution to households, soup kitchens, and food banks. First initiated in 1981 as the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, TEFAP was designed to reduce inventories and storage costs of surplus commodities through distribution to needy households. Although some surplus food is still distributed through TEFAP, Congress since 1989 has appropriated funds to purchase additional commodities for households. States are also provided funds for administrative costs. More information about TEFAP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/fdd].

**Commodity Supplemental Food Program**
The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is a direct food distribution program that serves the elderly and low-income women and children. Similar to WIC, this program distributes food packages tailored to the nutritional needs of participants. More information about the CSFP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/fdd].

**Box 10**
**Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs: An Overview (continued)**

**Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations**
The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) is a Federal program that provides commodity foods to low-income households, including the elderly living on Indian reservations, and to Native American families residing in designated areas near reservations. Many Native Americans participate in the FDPIR as an alternative to the Food Stamp Program, usually because they do not have easy access to food stores. More information about the FDPIR is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/fdd].

**The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program**
The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) was established in 1992 to provide WIC participants with increased access to fresh produce. WIC participants are given coupons to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at authorized local farmers' markets. The program is funded through a legislatively mandated set-aside in the WIC program appropriation. More information about the WIC FMNP is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/wic].

**Nutrition Services Incentives Program (NSIP)**
The Nutrition Services Incentives Program provides cash and commodities to States for meals for senior citizens. The food is delivered through senior citizen centers or Meals On Wheels programs located throughout the country. More information is available at [www.aoa.gov/nutrition].

## 5.3  Indicators

| Indicator | Appendix | Data Collection Tool |
|---|---|---|
| **Federal Food Assistance Programs—Number and Location** | | |
| Number and location of Food Stamp Program application sites | A | Tables 3 and 4 |
| Number and location of WIC clinics | A | Tables 3 and 4 |
| Number and location of schools with National School Lunch Program | A | Tables 3 and 4 |
| Number and location of schools with School Breakfast Program | A | Tables 3 and 4 |
| Number and location of Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) providers | A | Tables 3 and 4 |
| Number and location of Summer Food Service Program sites | A | Tables 3 and 4 |
| Number and location of TEFAP and CSFP distribution sites | A | Tables 3 and 4 |
| Number and location of WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program sites | A | Tables 3 and 4 |
| Number and location of Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) sites | A | Tables 3 and 4 |
| Number and location of elderly nutrition programs | A | Tables 3 and 4 |
| **Federal Food Assistance Programs—Participation** | | |
| Participation in Food Stamp Program | A | Table 3 |
| Participation in WIC Program | A | Table 3 |
| Participation in National School Lunch Program | A | Table 3 |
| Participation in School Breakfast Program | A | Table 3 |
| Participation in CACFP | A | Table 3 |
| Participation in Summer Food Service Program | A | Table 3 |
| Participation in TEFAP distribution | A | Table 3 |
| Participation in WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program | A | Table 3 |
| Participation in Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) | A | Table 3 |
| Participation in Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) | A | Table 3 |
| Participation in Meals On Wheels Program | A | Table 3 |
| Participation in Nutrition Services Incentives Program (NSIP) | A | Table 3 |
| **Retail Stores and Other Places To Purchase Food** | | |
| Availability of authorized food stamp retailers | A | Table 5 |
| Number, type, and location of retail food stores | A | Tables 6 and 7 |
| Number and location of consumer food cooperatives | A | Table 8 |
| Number and location of farmers' markets | A | Table 9 |
| **Emergency Food Assistance Providers** | | |
| Number, location, and times of operation of food banks | A | Tables 10 and 11 |
| Number, location, and times of operation of food pantries | A | Tables 10 and 11 |
| Number, location, and times of operation of emergency kitchens | A | Tables 10 and 11 |

# 6. Assessment of Household Food Security

► 6.1  Purpose

► 6.2  Analysis

► 6.3  Indicators

# 6. Assessment of Household Food Security

## 6.1 Purpose

Accurate measurement of household food security can help public officials, policymakers, service providers, and community groups assess the need for assistance, judge the effectiveness of existing programs designed to help such households, and identify population subgroups with unusually severe levels of food insecurity.

The main question driving this assessment is this: Is household food insecurity a problem that is directly or personally experienced for a significant number of people in the community?

A measurement tool has been developed and used in numerous surveys, both large and small, to gather data on household food security. These data are currently available at the national and State level but generally not for individual counties or communities. The measurement tool itself consists of a standard set of 18 questions (or a reliable subset of 6 questions)(Bickel, et. al., 2000) about several general types of household food conditions, events, and behaviors:

- Anxiety that the household food budget or food supply may be insufficient to meet basic needs.
- Perceptions that the food eaten by household members is inadequate in quality or quantity.
- Reported instances of reduced food intake, or consequences of reduced food intake (such as the physical sensation of hunger or reported weight loss) for adults in the household (omitted in the 6 question subset).
- Reported instances of reduced food intake or its consequences for children in the household.

These questions form the basis for a highly sophisticated, scientifically grounded measurement of the severity of food insecurity as experienced and reported by household members. In addition, a simple scale is easily constructed from the responses to the 18 questions that allows one to estimate the number of households that experience food insecurity and hunger within three broad ranges or levels of severity:

- **Food secure:** households with no or minimal indication of food insecurity.
- **Food insecure without hunger:** households concerned about inadequate resources to buy enough food who have adjusted by decreasing the quality of their family diet with little or no reduction in household food intake.
- **Food insecure with hunger:** food insecure households in which one or more members (mainly adults) have decreased the amount of food they consume to the extent that they have repeatedly experienced the physical sensation of hunger.

As the terms are defined here, household food insecurity and hunger are conditions resulting from financial resource constraints. Hunger, for example, can occur in many situations, including dieting and being too busy to eat. The Federal Food Security Measure, however, is concerned only with food insecurity and hunger that occur because the household does not have enough money or other resources to buy food. (See box 11.) Hunger, in this sense, may be seen as a severe stage of food insecurity, rather than as a distinct or separate condition from the more general experience of food insecurity. Moreover, while this condition is usually associated with poverty, it is not the same thing as general income inadequacy. Rather, it is the condition of deprivation in this one area of basic need.

The best way to collect household food security data for your community is to conduct a representative household food security survey. This process is described in USDA's *Guide to Measuring Household Food Security, Revised 2000* (Bickel et al.*)*. In preparation for conducting such a survey, or as a simpler alternative that can nevertheless help you gather some information on the experiences that people are having with food insecurity, and the coping mechanisms used by community members, we have developed focus group guides and materials (appendix B) and a simplified version of the household food security questionnaire. This abbreviated survey is not meant to replace a larger survey effort, but it can provide you with information on the people participating in the focus group session. The results should never be used to characterize household food security status throughout the community.

Although the relationship between community food security and household food security has not been defined clearly, the two are inter-related. For example, it is clear that the economic conditions of a community affect the likelihood that residents will have adequate financial resources to maintain household food security. Similarly, communities in which food is inaccessible or unavailable are more likely to have a greater number of households experiencing food insecurity than other communities. We do not suggest that household food security status equates to community food security but rather that it is an important indicator of a potential problem.

Clearly, a community cannot be considered food secure if any of its members are experiencing food insecurity directly in their own lives. In this sense when the household food security measure is used in a representative survey of the community, it can provide a solidly quantified "bottom-line" indicator of the state of food security within

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**Box 11**
**What Does the Federal Food Security Measure Tell Us About Individual Food Security?**

The Federal Food Security Measure measures the food security status of *household members as a group* and not necessarily the situation of any particular household member.

In general, conditions of food insecurity are believed to affect all household members, although not necessarily in the same way. By contrast, hunger is a uniquely individual phenomenon—some members of the household may be hungry while others are not.

Consequently, when the measure classifies a household into the more severe level of food insecurity with hunger, what it tells us is that at least some member, or members, of the household are experiencing hunger due to insufficiency of household resources, but not necessarily all members. As a result, the estimated number and percent of households that are food insecure with hunger need to be interpreted carefully. These are households with evidence to indicate that some member (s) has/have been hungry due to lack of resources at least sometime during the past 12 months, but not necessarily all members and not necessarily in all, or even most, months.

Excerpted from G. Bickel, et al. *Guide to Measuring Household Food Security, Revised 2000*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, March 2000, p.13.

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the community, as directly experienced by community members. This makes it a strong tool for community needs assessment and monitoring of the community's progress over time in reducing the prevalence of food insecurity.

## 6.2  Analysis

The analysis of the focus group data that will be collected to assess household food security will be qualitative in nature. It will provide the community with insights into the situation but not specific numbers of how many households experience household food insecurity.

## 6.3  Indicators

The indicators below include those that are incorporated into the abbreviated survey and coping mechanisms that are discussed in the focus group sessions.

| Indicator | Appendix | Data Collection Tool |
|---|---|---|
| Household food security indicators | B | Focus Group on Household Food Security |
| Coping actions to obtain food (e.g., getting food from food pantries or soup kitchens or using other techniques to make the existing amount of food last longer) | B | Focus Group on Household Food Security |

# 7. Assessment of Food Resource Accessibility

► 7.1  Purpose

► 7.2  Analysis

► 7.3  Indicators

# 7. Assessment of Food Resource Accessibility

## 7.1  Purpose

Ensuring access for low-income households to food retailers and other food resources in the community depends on both the existence of food stores and other food resources at reasonable distances from low-income households and the ability of such households to physically get to these resources using a private vehicle or public transportation.

These resources include retail food stores, farmers' markets, food cooperatives, and food assistance programs. The collection of this information will include the use of existing data and a variety of surveys as described below. Four key questions frame this assessment:

- Are food resources located near low-income neighborhoods?
- Is public and/or private transportation available between the resources and low-income neighborhoods?
- What barriers influence people's use of community food resources?
- Does the community have the infrastructure necessary to deliver Federal food assistance benefits effectively?

## 7.2  Analysis

Exhibit 1 presents the framework for this assessment. It introduces key questions, possible answers, and the implications of those answers. The highlighted areas indicating the presence of a specific type of problem are meant to alert community leaders to a potential community food insecurity problem.

**Are Resources Geographically Accessible?**

The purpose of this question is to determine how accessible food resources are to low-income households. To answer this question, you will use the information on location of food resources and community demographics by neighborhood or small area. This information was collected in the community characteristics profile and the profile of food resources (Chapters 4 and 5). At this point, you may have developed maps with this information at the county level. To determine the accessibility of food resources, you can create a map that indicates food resource locations and neighborhood demographics.

The assessment begins by using existing information to determine whether food resources (retail food stores, farmers' markets, food cooperatives, and food assistance programs) are located near low-income neighborhoods. If they are located near low-income residential areas, then the assumption is that food resource accessibility is unlikely to be a problem. However, it is still important to find out whether there are barriers that make the use of these resources difficult. This information will be collected directly from community residents in focus groups. If people discuss other community-based factors that make it difficult for them to use food resources, a food resource problem might exist. If no barriers are evident, such a problem is unlikely.

**Exhibit 1. Food Resource Accessibility Assessment**

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Are food resources         │
                    │  accessible to low-income    │
                    │  residents?                  │
                    └─────────────────────────────┘
                      │                        │
            ◇ Yes                         ◇ No
              │                              │
              │                  ┌─────────────────────────────┐
              │                  │  Is public or personal       │
              │                  │  transportation available?   │
              │                  └─────────────────────────────┘
              │                              │
              │                         ◇ No
              │                              │
              │                  ┌─────────────────────────────┐
              │                  │  Are personal transportation │
              │                  │  resources available?        │
              │                  └─────────────────────────────┘
              │                              │
              │                         ◇ No
              │                              │
    ┌──────────────────────┐    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
    │ Accessibility         │    │ Potential accessibility      │
    │ problem unlikely      │    │ problem                      │
    └──────────────────────┘    └─────────────────────────────┘
              │                              │
              └──────────┬───────────────────┘
                ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                │  Are there other barriers to  │
                │  use of food resources?       │
                └─────────────────────────────┘
                  │                        │
            ◇ No                       ◇ Yes
              │                          │
    ┌──────────────────────┐    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
    │ Food resource         │    │ Potential food resource      │
    │ problem unlikely      │    │ problem                      │
    └──────────────────────┘    └─────────────────────────────┘
```
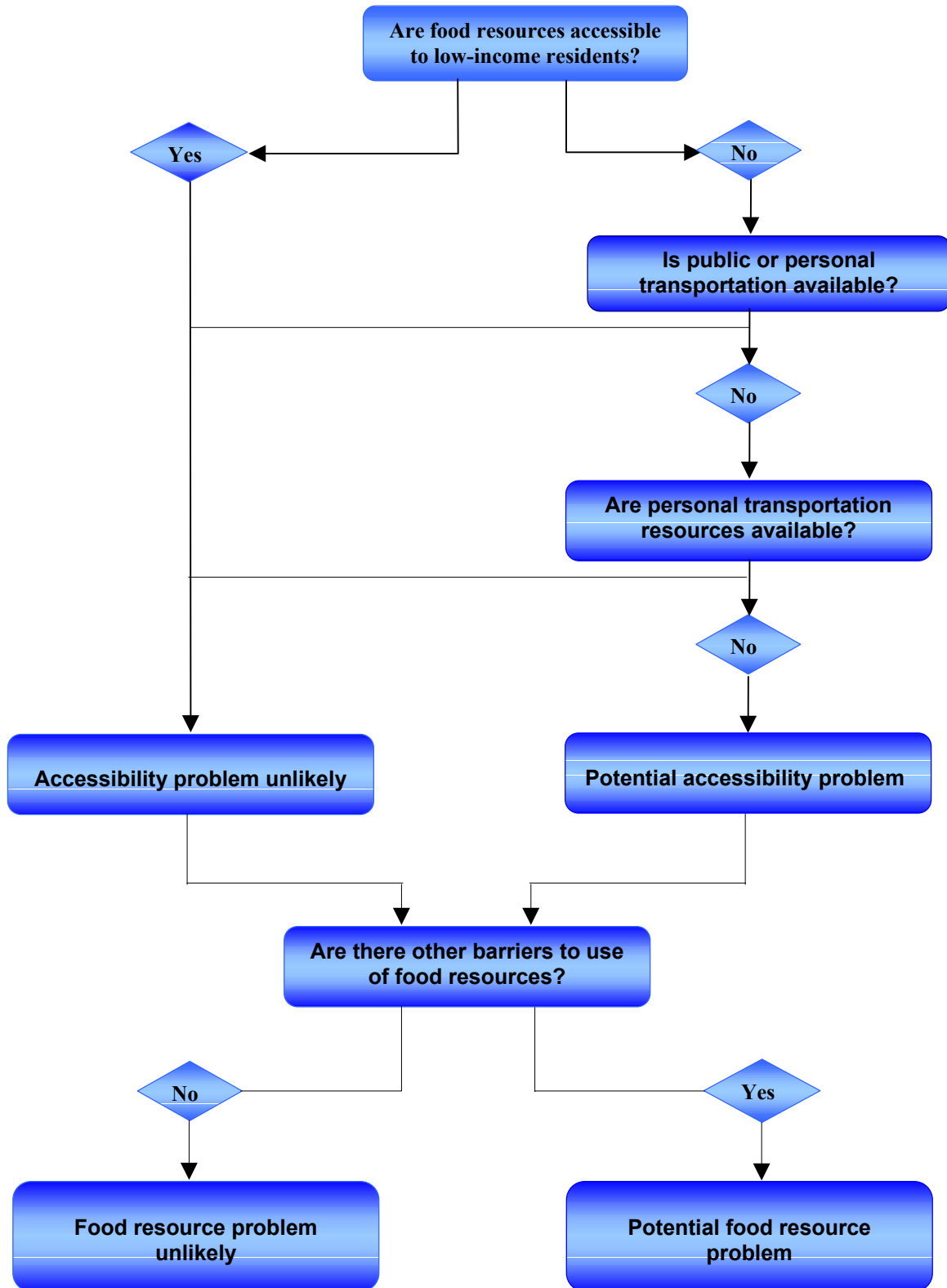
In the event that food resources are not located near low-income residential areas, you will want to determine whether public transportation (i.e., bus, train, etc.) is available. If so, then it can be assumed that accessibility is not a problem. However, if public transportation is not available, it is necessary to determine whether low-income residents have adequate personal transportation resources available to help them get to stores and food programs before determining whether accessibility is a potential problem. In either case, it is important to check for other barriers to use of these resources.

**Are There Barriers to Access?**

Data collected directly from low-income households can be used to determine whether there are barriers, in addition to transportation issues, that make it difficult for such households to access food resources. These barriers might include the following:

- Inconvenient hours
- Poor customer service
- Lack of information
- Stigma
- Distance to resources
- Insufficient food or food benefits available or offered

Collecting data on the community's Federal food assistance administration and problems encountered by low-income households in accessing these resources can

help your community. This data collection can both identify potential barriers that may cause eligible households to miss out on needed benefits and earmark areas for improvement in food assistance delivery systems.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service recently published *The National Nutrition Safety Net: Tools for Community Food Security*. The purpose of the toolkit is to help communities assess whether they have the necessary infrastructure to effectively deliver Federal food assistance benefits. The toolkit contains a set of checklists to help you determine various ways to strengthen the delivery of Federal food assistance benefits in your community. The toolkit is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/fsec].

## 7.3 Indicators

To answer the questions posed in this assessment, several pieces of information must be collected and analyzed. Although some of the data will best be collected from existing data files, data on shopping patterns, transportation barriers, and other factors that may make it difficult for households to access food resources are best collected from individuals in those households. A randomly selected household survey may provide the most reliable data on barriers, but it is costly and difficult to administer. Therefore, we suggest that data on barriers be collected through focus groups.

| Indicator | Appendix | Data Collection Tool |
|---|---|---|
| **Neighborhood Characteristics** | | |
| Total number of persons by ZIP Code | A | Table 12 |
| Number of persons living below the poverty line by ZIP Code | A | Table 12 |
| Number of total occupied housing units by ZIP Code | A | Table 13 |
| **Transportation Characteristics** | | |
| Number of vehicles per occupied housing unit by ZIP Code | A | Table 13 |
| Number, type, routes, frequency, and per ride cost of public transportation resources (buses, trains, subways) | A | Table 14 |
| Number, type, routes, frequency, and per ride cost of paratransit resources (store shuttles, taxis, etc.) | A | Table 15 |
| Transportation available for food shopping | B | Focus Group on Food Shopping Patterns |
| **Shopping Patterns and Barriers** | | |
| Food shopping patterns/sources | B | Focus Group on Food Shopping Patterns |
| Obstacles to food shopping (travel, time, cost, distance) | B | Focus Group on Food Shopping Patterns |
| Barriers to use of food assistance programs | B | Focus Group on Household Food Assistance<br><br>*The National Nutrition Safety Net* toolkit |

# 8. Assessment of Food Availability and Affordability

► 8.1  Purpose

► 8.2  Analysis

► 8.3  Indicators

# 8. Assessment of Food Availability and Affordability

## 8.1 Purpose

In addition to food resource accessibility, community food security also depends on the availability and affordability of a variety of food items sold through retail and other food resources. Households participating in the Federal Food Stamp Program receive benefits that are used to purchase food from food retailers authorized by USDA to accept food stamps. Maximizing the effectiveness of Federal food assistance programs requires that sufficient quantities of healthful foods are available in the marketplace at prices low-income households can afford.

The key questions for this assessment include

- Is a variety of food available in retail stores?
- Are the available foods affordable to low-income households?
- Can the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) market basket be purchased from these retailers at or below the TFP cost threshold set by USDA?

The assessment begins by using a food store survey to determine whether retail stores used by low-income residents offer a variety of affordable foods (see Appendix C:  Food Store Survey Instruments and Materials). The survey is based on a food list that provides all of the foods needed to prepare a week's worth of recipes and menus developed for USDA's TFP for a reference family of four. (See box 12.) The survey is based on USDA's TFP

because the plan is a national standard for a nutritious diet at a minimal cost and is used as the basis for food stamp allotments.

Because the TFP is based on a single week's menus and recipes, it is not meant to be representative of any individual household's food needs or habits. Rather, it is intended to serve as a standard for assessing the availability and affordability of a standardized TFP market basket across food stores.

The measure of variety will be determined using a TFP market basket of food to determine whether availability is a problem. Whether or not a variety of foods are available, it is also important to determine whether the food that is available is affordable. Thus, the store survey also will be used to collect information on the prices of food available in retail stores. A community may have a wide variety of available food (no availability problem), but the food may be too expensive for low-income residents (affordability is a potential problem). On the other hand, a community may have a poor variety of food, but the available food may be affordable to all residents.

The following diagram presents the framework for this assessment. It introduces key questions, different response patterns, and their implications. The highlighted elements provide community leaders with a way of determining whether a potential community food insecurity problem exists.

**Exhibit 2. Food Availability and Affordability Assessment**



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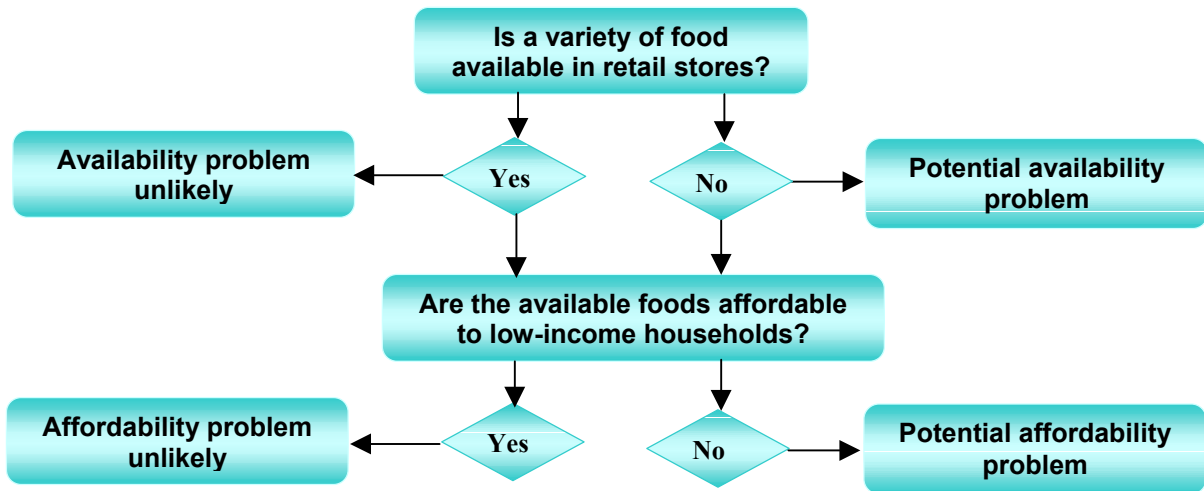
**Box 12**
**USDA's Thrifty Food Plan**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) serves as a national standard for a nutritious diet at a minimal cost. It is one of four official USDA food plans, which also include the Low-Cost Plan, the Moderate-Cost Plan, and the Liberal Plan. The TFP is used by the Federal Government to provide food and economic information to consumers preparing food on a limited budget. It also serves as the basis for food stamp allotments.

The TFP represents a set of market baskets, each applicable to 1 of 12 age-gender groups. Each market basket contains a selection of foods in quantities that reflect current dietary recommendations, actual consumption patterns, food composition data, and food prices. The current TFP, revised in 1999, is the first to incorporate the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (1995, 4th edition) and serving recommendations from USDA's Food Guide Pyramid.

The monthly and weekly cost of the TFP market baskets and the other USDA food plans is calculated by USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) and updated to current dollars on a monthly basis using the Consumer Price Index for specific food items. These cost estimates assume that all meals and snacks are purchased at stores and prepared at home.

To help households implement the TFP, the market basket for a TFP reference family of four (male and female ages 20 to 50 and two children ages 6 to 8 and 9 to 11) has been converted into three sets of weekly menus, recipes, and food lists. Each weekly menu consists of seven daily menus, with three meals and usually one snack per day. The menus and food lists meet the cost criterion of the TFP market basket. Convenience was considered whenever possible but was a secondary objective in developing the menus and recipes. A sample of eight, four-person, food stamp households purchased the foods and tested the menus and recipes for acceptability.

For more information, visit www.usda.gov/cnpp/FoodPlans/TFP99/index.htm on the Web.

## 8.2 Analysis

Once you have collected data on food prices and availability using the Food Store Survey instrument, you will need to analyze the data and present it in a form that is understandable, meaningful, and easy to use. This section describes the process that you will use to analyze the data collected in the Food Store Survey and answer key questions for this assessment, including

- Is a variety of food available in retail stores?
- Are the available foods affordable to low-income households?

### Food Availability

To determine whether an adequate variety of food is available in your community, you will need to calculate the number and share of missing items in each store and across all stores. For each store type (e.g., supermarkets, convenience stores), you will learn how to calculate the following indicators:

- Total number of missing items per store
- Average number of missing items per store
- Percentage of items missing per store
- Items most frequently missing
- Percentage of items missing per store in each food category (fresh vegetables, fresh meats, canned and frozen vegetables, condiments, etc.)
- Percentage of missing items compared with the national average

Detailed instructions for performing these calculations are included in Appendix C.

### Comparisons Across Stores

Comparing the availability of foods across stores is helpful for determining whether stores in certain parts of your community may differ in the number and types of foods

available. You may want to make the following comparisons:

- Total number of items missing in each store
- Percentage of items missing in each store
- Percentage of items missing in each food category

### Comparisons With National Data

Comparing your results with national data allows you to determine whether food availability is more or less of a problem in your community than in the United States as a whole. The best source of national data on food availability is the *Authorized Food Retailer's Characteristics and Access Study*, published by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) in February 1997.

This report is based on food availability data collected from a nationally representative sample of 2,400 authorized food stamp retailers in six store type categories: supermarkets, large groceries, small groceries, convenience stores and/or grocery-gas combinations, specialty stores (e.g., meat and produce markets), and other stores (e.g., general stores, co-ops, produce routes). Separate data on food availability are available for rural, urban, and mixed areas and for different income levels.

For each store, information was gathered on the variety and availability of products in a 142-item market basket designed to include foods from all of the major food groups. Items were selected on the basis of their importance in food expenditures of low-income households.

These foods were aggregated into the following food groups:

- Fresh meat
- Processed meats
- Fresh poultry
- Fresh seafood
- Packaged meat

- Fresh produce
- Packaged produce
- Dairy products
- Eggs
- Cereals
- Bakery products
- Dinner mixtures
- Other foods

Food availability was measured as the percentage of the total market basket of foods offered in a particular store type. Results from the survey are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Supermarkets | 95% |
| Large grocery stores | 81% |
| Small grocery stores | 51% |
| Specialty stores | 20% |
| Convenience stores | 50% |
| Grocery/gas combinations | 53% |
| Other stores | 29% |
| All stores | 54% |

Assume that you surveyed five supermarkets in your community and that these supermarkets were missing 15 percent of the total items on average; that is, 85 percent of foods surveyed were available. This compares negatively with 95 percent nationwide. It is important, however, when making such comparisons, to note that the market basket used in the FNS study differs in some important respects.

The list of food items in the Food Store Survey (appendix C) reflects current Federal Dietary Guidelines and Food Guide Pyramid recommendations. As a result, it includes many lowfat versions of frequently consumed foodstuffs, such as turkey ham, lean ground beef, and yolkless noodles, that were not included in the FNS market basket. To the extent that such items may be less likely to be available in supermarkets than their higher fat counterparts, the percentage of missing items would likely be higher using the Food Store Survey than the FNS market basket. However, differences in availability across

store types would likely be comparable whether the FNS market basket or our Food Store Survey is used.

**Food Prices**

Along with availability, the Food Store Survey can also be used to determine whether the foods available for sale are affordable to low-income households and to look at differences in food prices in different parts of your community. For each store type, you will learn how to answer the following questions:

- What is the average price of individual food items across all stores?
- What is the average price per unit of each food category across all stores?
- How does the average price for an individual food item differ across stores?
- How does the average price for an entire food category differ across stores?
- What is the cost of the entire toolkit market basket?
- How does the cost of the toolkit market basket vary across individual stores and store types?
- How does the cost of the toolkit market basket cost vary across different food categories?
- How does the cost of the toolkit market basket compare with the TFP reference price?
- How does the gap between the toolkit market basket price and the TFP reference price differ across stores?

Detailed instructions for calculating prices and costs from the food store survey are included in appendix C.

**Presenting the Data**

It may be helpful to present these and other data using either a chart or map. (For information on how and when to use charts or maps, see chapter 3). A bar chart would be a

useful way to present information on the percentage of missing items across stores.

## 8.3 Indicators

| Indicator | Appendix | Data Collection Tool |
|-----------|----------|---------------------|
| Availability of food | C | Food Store Survey |
| Cost of food | C | Food Store Survey |

# 9. Assessment of Community Food Production Resources

► 9.1  Purpose

► 9.2  Analysis

► 9.3  Indicators

# 9. Assessment of Community Food Production Resources

## 9.1  Purpose

Local agricultural and food production resources can play an important role in community food security. (See box 13.) When implemented together with a strong Federal nutrition safety net and emergency food assistance programs that alleviate food insecurity and hunger over the short term, strengthening your community's agricultural system can, over the long term, boost the effectiveness of Federal food assistance and education programs. This goal can be accomplished by increasing the availability of high-quality, affordable food within a community, offering small farmers an opportunity to maintain economic viability by supplying the local market with fresh foods, strengthening economic and social ties between farms and urban residents, and channeling a larger share of residents' food spending back to the local economy.

This section discusses the data needed to conduct an assessment of community food production. Key questions include

- Does the community have food production, value-added processing, or food distribution resources?
- Do low-income households have the opportunity to participate in community gardens or other food production activities?
- Are there any school-based gardening programs?
- Are locally produced foods sold through local food retailers and restaurants?
- Does the local school district purchase foods from local producers?
- Are locally produced foods used by other institutional food service outlets, such as colleges, prisons, and hospitals?

> **Box 13**
> **What are some different types of community food production resources?**
>
> **Community gardens:** A community garden is any shared space where people come together to grow vegetables, flowers, or any plants. Through community gardening, individuals can produce fresh vegetables, beautify their neighborhoods, and make changes in their own communities in tangible, effective ways. Community gardens have a long history of success in all sorts of areas, even in the most dense cities. Whether planting a few seeds in a window box or organizing the transformation of a trash-filled vacant lot into a space for an entire neighborhood to grow food, community gardening can be a worthwhile and plausible project for many people. The most direct benefit of community gardening is the production of fresh, nutritious produce; however, many gardens become centers for education, food assistance programs, local marketing, and small business development.
>
> **Community-Supported Agriculture:** Community-supported agriculture (CSA) is a partnership of mutual commitment between a farm and a community of supporters, which provides a direct link between the production and consumption of food. Supporters cover a farm's yearly operating budget by purchasing a share of the season's harvest. CSA members make a commitment to support the farm throughout the season and assume the costs, risks, and bounty of growing food along with the farmer or grower. Members help pay for seeds, fertilizer, water, equipment maintenance, and labor. In return, the farm provides, to the best of its ability, a healthy supply of seasonal fresh produce throughout the growing season.

## 9.2 Analysis

Exhibit 3 presents the framework for this assessment. It introduces key questions, possible response paths, answers, and the implications of various answers. The highlighted elements indicate the presence of a specific type of problem and alert community leaders to the possibility of a potential food insecurity problem. For this assessment, there is one potential problem—the viability of local food production, which includes local food producers, community gardens, community-supported agriculture, farmers, dairies, and fisheries. After determining whether such resources exist in your community, you will want to explore further to find out whether they are supported by the community (politically and financially) and whether the locally produced food is available and affordable to all community members, including low-income residents. Negative answers to any of these key questions indicate a potential food production problem.

The assessment of community food production will begin with a profile of existing local food production resources. It then progresses to ask whether local food producers are supported and used by the community. The political and economic support of community members and organizations plays a large role in the success of local food producers. To assess the community's commitment to local food producers, you can conduct focus groups with community household members, key representatives from community organizations, and food retailers.

The analysis also can use mapping techniques to identify the location of food production resources and to compare this information with food markets and other community retailing sites (farmers' markets, co-ops, etc.) as well as to community transportation resources, to determine whether all residents have access to community-produced foods.

## 9.3 Indicators

The majority of the data on local food production resources can be found from existing data resources. Data on local food production and marketing infrastructures (i.e., the linkages between local food producers, food processors, food retailers, and other marketing outlets like local schools, prisons, and hospitals) will be most easily explored through conversations with farmers and others involved with the local food system in the focus group on community food production. You also can interview food service managers with the local school district, prisons, and hospitals.

**Exhibit 3. Community Food Production Assessment**
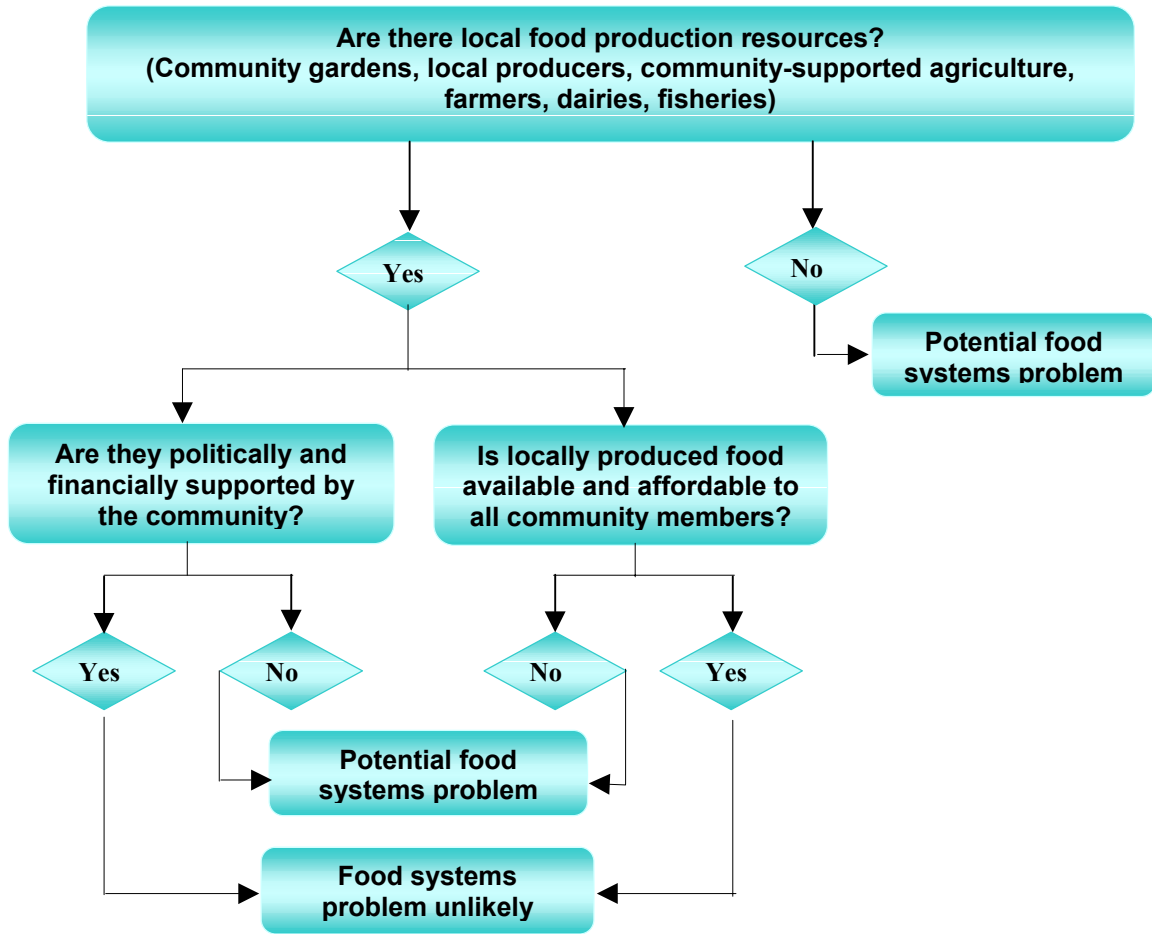
| Indicator | Appendix | Data Collection Tool |
|---|---|---|
| **Food Production Resources** | | |
| Number and location of community gardens | A | Table 16 |
| Number and location of school-based gardens | A | Table 17 |
| Number and location of community-supported agriculture programs | A | Table 18 |
| Number and location of farms | A | Table 19 |
| Number and location of dairies and fisheries | A | Table 19 |
| Number and location of food manufacturers and distributors | A | Tables 20 and 21 |
| **Political and Community Support** | | |
| Linkages between local food producers, food processors, food retailers, and other marketing outlets | B | Focus Group on Community Food Production Resources |
| Political support for local food producers | B | Focus Group on Community Food Production Resources |
| Economic support for local food producers | B | Focus Group on Community Food Production Resources |
| Frequency of use by individuals | B | Focus Group on Community Food Production Resources |
| Frequency of use by community organizations | B | Focus Group on Community Food Production Resources |
| Frequency of use by food retailers | B | Focus Group on Community Food Production Resources |

# 10. Glossary

# 10. Glossary

**Community food security assessment:** The collection of data that will determine whether households in the community have access to nutritionally adequate, sufficient, and culturally acceptable foods to satisfy their dietary needs.

**Community profile:** A detailed description of the community and it resources that may be developed after all data collection activities have been completed.

**Existing data:** Previously compiled data.

**Data collection instruments:** Forms used to collect data to answer research questions. They may include survey forms, interview protocols, observation sheets, and recording forms used in the extraction of data from records.

**Data collection tools:** The documents (e.g., survey forms, recording forms, interview questions, observation recording sheets) used to structure the collection of data.

**Data or data elements:** Pieces of information relevant for the assessment.

**Entitlement programs:** Government programs that provide cash, commodities, or services to all qualifying low-income individuals or households.

**Food security:** The state in which all persons obtain a nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable diet at all times through nonemergency sources, including food from local production. Food security broadens the traditional concept of hunger, embracing a systemic view of the causes of hunger and poor nutrition within a community while identifying the changes necessary to prevent their occurrence. Food security programs confront hunger and poverty.

**Household food security:** The status of a household with reference to its access to nutritionally adequate and culturally acceptable foods in sufficient amounts to meet the needs of all household members.

**Indicators:** Categories of information for which data are being collected (e.g., number of household members, ethnicity of household members, employment status).

**Primary data:** Primary data are those data that are collected first hand (i.e., by a researcher, scientist, etc.)

**Secondary data:** Secondary data are data that have been collected by another entity and may be available through a report, publication, or database.

**Toolkit:** A self-contained package containing all materials necessary for meeting some purpose.

# 11. References

# 11. References

Anderson SA (ed). "Core Indicators of Nutritional State for Difficult-to-Sample Populations." *Journal of Nutrition* 1990; 120(11S):1557-1600.

Bickel G, Nord M, Price C, Hamilton W, Cook J. *Guide to Measuring Household Food Security, Revised 2000.* Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service; March 2000.

Biehler D, Fisher A, Siedenburg K, Winne M, Zachary J. *Getting Food on the Table: An Action Guide to Local Food Policy.* Venice, CA: Community Food Security Coalition; March 1999.

Joseph H (ed). *Community Food Security: A Guide to Concept, Design, and Implementation.* Venice, CA: Community Food Security Coalition; 1997.

Kantor LS. "Community Food Security Programs Improve Food Access." *Food Review* 2001; 24(1):20-26.

Macaluso T. "The Extent of Trafficking in the Food Stamp Program: An Update." Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis and Evaluation; March 2000.

Mantovani R, Daft L, Macaluso T, Welsh J, Hoffman K. *Authorized Food Retailers' Characteristics and Access Study.* Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Service, Office of Analysis and Evaluation; February 1997.

*The National Nutrition Safety Net: Tools for Community Food Security.* Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service; January 2000.

*Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. 4th edition. Washington, DC: U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services; 1995.

Wolfe WS, Brenner B, Ferris-Morris M. *Monitoring the Nutrition of Your Community: A "How-To" Manual.* Ithaca, NY: Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University; 1992.

# 12. Annotated Bibliography of Community Food Security Assessment Studies

***Access Denied: An Analysis of Problems Facing East Austin Residents in Their Attempts to Obtain Affordable, Nutritious Food***

A comprehensive analysis of national, state, and local data, with the purpose of describing East Austin residents' problems regarding access to nutritious and affordable food. Information was gathered from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including food stores; national, State, and local census data; the Texas Department of Human Services; and the *Progressive Grocer* supermarket database.

Sustainable Food Center, Austin, Texas, 1995.

Contact:     Sustainable Food Center
             1715 East 6th Street, Suite 200
             Austin, Texas  78702
             (512) 472-2073 (voice)
             (512) 472-2075 (fax)


***Adams County Head Start: Community Assessment***

Identifies the needs of Head Start eligible children and families, evaluates current practices, assesses the resources available to enhance the program, and examines unmet needs. Research consists of a compilation of demographic and economic statistics from a variety of State and local sources, including local school districts, the Adams County Department of Social Services, the Colorado Department of Education, and nonprofit groups. In addition, a focus group interview was conducted with representatives from these agencies, as well as Head Start staff, parents, and representatives from other local service agencies, to discuss perceptions of the health, nutritional, educational, and social services needs of Head Start children and their families.

Adams County, Colorado Head Start, March 1999.

Contact:     Head Start of Adams County, Colorado
             Administrative Offices
             7111 East 56th Avenue
             Commerce City, Colorado  80022
             (303) 286-4141 (voice)
             (303) 286-4130 (fax)


***A Citizen's Guide to Food Recovery***

A resource guide on food recovery and gleaning programs. Outlines the key components of successful food recovery and gleaning projects, discusses available nonprofit and government resources for food recovery and gleaning activities, and provides a directory of public and private organizations—from the national to the local level—that are involved in food recovery and gleaning activities.

Contact:        Charlene Price
                U.S. Department of Agriculture
                Economic Research Service
                1800 M Street, NW
                Washington, DC  20005
                (202) 694-5384 (voice)
                (202) 694-5662 (fax)
                ccprice@ers.usda.gov

### *Community-Based Food System Monitoring System, Knoxville, Tennessee*

A food system monitoring system based on five food security goals of the Knoxville Food Policy
Council: the sustainability of local food production, the economic vitality of the food system, the
quality of the food system, nutrition education, and the availability of adequate and nutritious food
supply to all. Researchers identified indicators for each goal, investigated the degree to which
variables were available to measure each indicator area, and selected indicator areas that could be
objectively measured with available resources. Secondary data were gathered from a variety of
sources and summarized in a printed report and Internet database.

Haughton B. Department of Nutrition, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, October 1997.

Contact:        Betsy Haughton, Ed.D., R.D., L.D.N.
                Director of the Public Health Nutrition Program
                College of Human Ecology
                University of Tennessee-Knoxville
                Knoxville, TN  37996-1900
                (423) 974-5445 (voice)
                (423) 974-3491 (fax)
                haughton@utk.edu

### *Community Food Security (CFS): A Guide to Concept, Design, and Implementation*

A comprehensive guide to the various components of community food security, defining concepts,
planning processes, needs assessment, collaborations and coalitions, project implementation,
interagency and multisector projects and strategies, entrepreneurship and community economic
development, funding issues, and long-term program support. It also provides an overview of four
of the existing CFS initiatives.
Joseph H (ed.). Community Food Security Coalition, 1997.

Contact:        Andy Fisher, Coordinator
                Community Food Security Coalition
                P.O. Box 209
                Venice, CA  90294
                (310) 822-5410 (voice)
                (310) 822-1440 (fax)
                asfisher@aol.com
                www.foodsecurity.org

or          Hugh Joseph, Ph.D.
            Tufts University, School of Nutrition Science and Policy
            126 Curtis Street
            Medford, MA  02155
            (508) 628-5000, x5442 (voice)
            (617) 738-7777 (fax)
            hjoseph@pearl.tufts.edu

### The Detroit Area Food System: Statistics and Trends

Used secondary data to assess three components of the Detroit area food system—food in community economic development, food in community health, and food in neighborhood revitalization. Primary data were collected in pilot studies on household food security and food availability in Detroit's food stores.

Pothukuchi K. Department of Geography and Urban Planning, Wayne State University, revised draft, June 1999.

Contact:     Kami Pothukuchi, Ph.D.
             225 State Hall
             Detroit, MI  48202
             (313) 577-4296 (voice)
             (313) 577-0022 (fax)
             k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu

### Fertile Ground: Planning for the Madison/Dane County Food System

An analysis of the Madison/Dane County food system, describing the conventional food system as it operates in the county and evaluating the system within the community food security framework employed in the Seeds of Change report. Contains an analysis of secondary data on environment, economic, and government indicators, as well as indicators of community supported agriculture (CSA) and community gardens. Includes primary data collection and analysis in the form of "food asset mapping"; a food price survey; focus group interviews with low-income adults and children to understand barriers to food access; a food-related strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of the neighborhoods; and a survey of food-related businesses.

Allen M, Born B, and Herbach G (eds.). Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1997.

Contact:     Jerome L. Kaufman, Ph.D.
             Department of Urban and Regional Planning
             University of Wisconsin-Madison
             Music Hall 206
             Madison, WI  53706
             (608) 262-1004 (voice)
             jkaufma@facstaff.wisc.edu

*From Field to Table: Linking Sustainable Agriculture with Local Communities in Northern California*

Used quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the local food system in Berkeley. Community members were interviewed at all levels of the local and regional food system, including farmers, food retailers, and consumers. Survey tools developed for the project include a residential survey, a farmers survey, a food store survey, and a liquor store survey.

Pinderhughes R. Urban Studies Program, San Francisco State University.

Contact:    Raquel Pinderhughes, Ph.D.
            San Francisco State University
            1600 Holloway Avenue, HSS 263
            San Francisco, CA  94132-4155
            (415) 338-1178 (voice)
            (415) 338-2391 (fax)
            raquelrp@sfsu.edu

*Homeward Bound: Food-Related Transportation Strategies in Low Income and Transit Dependent Communities*

A literature review of food access issues from both a food systems and transportation planning perspective, including a review and analysis of established private and public food access programs and case studies of emerging innovative food access programs in low-income communities.

Gottlieb R, Fisher A, Dohan M, O'Connor L, and Parks V. UCLA Pollution Prevention Education and Research Center & The Community Food Security Coalition, 1996.

        Contact:    Robert Gottlieb, Ph.D.
                    Professor, Chair
                    Department of Environmental Science and Studies
                    Occidental College
                    Los Angeles, CA  90041
                    (323) 259-2500 (voice)
                    gottlieb@oxy.edu

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                    (310) 822-1440 (fax)
                    asfisher@aol.com
                    www.foodsecurity.org

*Hot Peppers & Parking Lot Peaches: Evaluating Farmers' Markets in Low Income Communities*

An evaluation based on eight case studies of farmers' markets in the United States. Researchers identified the general characteristics of successful farmers' markets in low-income communities. Methods included a survey of consumers in two California communities on their attitudes and perceptions about farmers' markets and extensive in-person and phone interviews with farmers, farmers' market managers, and other organizers.

Fisher A. Community Food Security Coalition, January 1999.

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P.O. Box 209
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(310) 822-5410 (voice)
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*Household Food Security in the United States in 1995: The Food Security Measurement Project*

A description of the methods and findings of the Food Security Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) of the United States Bureau of the Census in 1995. The Food Security Supplement is the basis for comprehensive household measures of food security in the United States and has been adapted into the USDA Core Food Security Module. It is an 18-question survey used to classify households into 4 levels of food security status: (1) food secure, (2) food insecure without hunger, (3) food insecure with moderate hunger, and (4) food insecure with severe hunger.

USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis and Evaluation, September 1997.

Contact:     Steve Carlson
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, VA  22302
(703) 305-2134 (voice)
(703) 305.2576(fax)
steve.carlson@fns.usda.gov

*Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee: Milwaukee Food System Assessment Study (FSAS)*

*Comparative Study of Food Pricing and Availability in Milwaukee*
An assessment of the availability and prices of selected food items in retail food outlets located within and outside a target area in inner-city Milwaukee. Stores were classified by their location in relationship to the target area and by their size. More than 50 food items were selected for

examination (using a market basket approach). The store survey also collected data on other store characteristics, such as produce quality and overall store cleanliness.

Johnson K, Percy S, and Wagner E. Urban Research Center, September 1996.

*Socio-Spatial Relationships and Food Programs in Milwaukee's Food System*
An evaluation of spatial relationships within Milwaukee's food system using analytic geographic information systems (GIS) mapping techniques and demographic and statistical methods. Includes a socioeconomic and demographic profile and spatial analyses of Milwaukee's emergency food assistance providers, food stamp retailers, and food assistance centers.

Varela O. Center for Urban Initiatives and Research, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, November 1996.

*Food Insecurity in Milwaukee: A Qualitative Study of Food Pantry and Meal Program Users*
An exploration of the food needs of clients of food pantries and meal programs in Milwaukee. Using focus groups, researchers conducted intensive interviews to identify clients' unmet food needs, the extent to which those needs are satisfied by emergency food programs, obstacles they have faced in accessing the emergency programs, and food acquisition patterns.

Varela O, Johnson K, and Percy S. Center for Urban Initiatives and Research, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, February 1998.

*Perceptions and Experiences of Consumer Access to Food in Milwaukee's Inner City Neighborhood*
Researchers used a phone survey of residents and households in Milwaukee's inner-city neighborhoods to examine food-shopping patterns, eating patterns, use of food and nutrition programs, and levels of hunger and food insecurity.

Varela O, Haider-Markel D, and Percy S. Center for Urban Initiatives and Research, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, March 1998.

Contact:      Tim Locke
             Director of Community Development
             Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee
             201 South Hawley Court
             Milwaukee, WI  53214
             (414) 777-0483 (voice)
             (414) 777-0480 (fax)
             tlocke@hotmail.mailcity.com

**Improving Access to Food in Low-Income Communities: An Investigation of Three Bay Area Neighborhoods**

An investigation of barriers to nutritious and affordable food experienced by people living in three San Francisco Bay area low-income communities—The Tenderloin, Bayview/Hunters Point, and Fruitvale. Sites were selected on the basis of income/poverty, race/ethnicity, degree of community organization, and replicability, with some consideration given to demographic characteristics such

as age, household composition, and the circumstances of food acquisition for residents of the neighborhood. The project consisted of initial interviews and meetings with key government leaders and nongovernment organizations, members of the food industry, and residents representing distinct subpopulations within the neighborhoods. Researchers conducted 11 focus group interviews and 45 resident surveys in the 3 neighborhoods. They also conducted a market basket survey to compare prices at food retailers in and near two of the neighborhoods. The third part of the study consisted of a comprehensive literature review of all aspects of community food security systems, as well as summaries of meetings and interviews with community food security experts nationwide.

For the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr., Fund, by the California Food Policy Advocates, January 1996.

Contact:　　　Kenneth Hecht, Executive Director
　　　　　　　California Food Policy Advocates
　　　　　　　116 New Montgomery Street, Suite 530
　　　　　　　San Francisco, CA  94105
　　　　　　　(415) 777-4422 (voice)
　　　　　　　(415) 777-4466 (fax)
　　　　　　　kennethhecht@cfpa.net
　　　　　　　www.cfpa.net

### *Nutrition and Health Status in the Lower Mississippi Delta of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi: A Review of Existing Data*

The premier publication of the Lower Mississippi Delta Nutrition Intervention Research Initiative (Delta NIRI), a multiyear collaborative research study of health and nutrition intervention needs in the lower Mississippi Delta region of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. [Using secondary data, the report examines a variety of socioeconomic, demographic, and health and nutritional indicators in the Delta region, including the availability of community services and health care resources, health and nutritional status, food and nutrition program resources, food and nutrient intake, eating patterns, and household food security.

USDA Agricultural Research Service, 1997.

Contact:　　　Margaret Bogle, Ph.D., R.D.
　　　　　　　Executive Director
　　　　　　　Delta NIRI Project
　　　　　　　Agricultural Research Service
　　　　　　　U.S. Department of Agriculture
　　　　　　　10825 Financial Centre Parkway, Suite 309
　　　　　　　Little Rock, AR  72221
　　　　　　　(501) 954-9152 (voice)
　　　　　　　(501) 954-9596 (fax)
　　　　　　　mlbars@delta.ach.usms.edu

### *Seeds of Change: Strategies for Food Security for the Inner City*

The product of a year-long UCLA study that examined various components of community food security in the inner city (and specifically in Los Angeles). Components measured include nutrition education, public health, hunger advocacy, economic and community development, food retailing, local agriculture (sustainability, food production, direct marketing, and so forth), urban ecology, and public policy. Researchers examined these components at the local, regional, State, and national levels. Methods used include an extensive literature review of more than 1,000 policy, industry, and academic documents; interviews with key figures in the public and private sectors; and original research in the form of primary data collection, geographic information systems (GIS) analysis, and analysis of U.S. census data.

Ashman L, de la Vega J, Dohan M, Fisher F, Hippler R, and Romain B. Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of California, June 1993.

Contact:    Andy Fisher, Coordinator
            Community Food Security Coalition
            P.O. Box 209
            Venice, CA  90294
            (310) 822-5410 (voice)
            (310) 822-1440 (fax)
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            www.foodsecurity.org

### Supermarket Access in Cambridge: A Report to the Cambridge City Council
Used a market analysis of secondary data to evaluate food access in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Discusses strategies for mapping access to supermarkets, identifying underserved areas, and evaluating potential sites for new supermarkets. For each potential site, a site analysis was conducted that identified the location and owner, site conditions, applicable zoning, availability, neighborhood character, location in relation to the underserved area, and transportation routes. Researchers also conducted a Cambridge market basket food survey to examine food product availability and prices in different areas of the city.

Community Development Department, Cambridge, Massachusetts, December 1994.

Contact:    City of Cambridge
            Community Economic Development Department
            City Hall Annex
            57 Inman Street, 3rd Floor
            Cambridge, MA  02139
            (617) 349-4616 (voice)
            (617) 349-4669 (fax)

### The Thin Red Line: How the Poor Still Pay More

A study of the problems faced by low-income consumers in accessing basic consumer needs, such as decent affordable housing, quality food, health care, and banking and credit services. With relation to food needs, researchers conducted a total market basket survey, which examined the price of a monthly market basket for a family of four in different market areas. They also assessed

market demand in low-income and middle-income communities by considering consumers' driving time to food markets.

Troutt D. The West Coast Regional Office of Consumers Union, June 1993.

Contact:     Consumers Union
             West Coast Regional Office
             1535 Mission Street
             San Francisco, CA  94103-2512
             (414) 431-6747 (voice)
             (415) 431-0906 (fax)

### *The Urban Grocery Store Gap*

An assessment and analysis of the urban grocery store gap in 21 large U.S. cities. The study used secondary data from the 1990 U.S. Population Survey as well as market data from the *Progressive Grocer* supermarket database. The report examines the relationship between demographic characteristics and supermarket characteristics at the ZIP Code and city levels.

Cotterill R and Franklin A. Food Marketing Policy Center, University of Connecticut, April 1995.

Contact:     Ron Cotterill, Ph.D.
             Food Marketing Policy Center
             Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics
             University of Connecticut
             1376 Storrs Road, U-21
             Storrs, CT  06269-4021

# Appendix A
# Data Tables and Tips for Developing Them

► A.1  Steps To Get You Started When Collecting Existing Data

► A.2  Tools for Collecting Socioeconomic and Demographic Data

► A.3  Tools for Assembling a Profile of Community Food Resources

► A.4  Tools for Assessing Food Resource Accessibility

► A.5  Tools for Assessing Community Food Production Resources

# Appendix A.  Data Tables and Tips for Developing Them

## A.1  Steps To Get You Started When Collecting Existing Data

This section includes table shells and step-by-step instructions for retrieving existing socioeconomic, demographic, and program participation data. Some of these data have already been compiled by Federal, State, or local agencies and are publicly available on the Internet (See Chapter 3: Data Collection and Analysis Guide). When using existing data, it is always preferable to use the most recent data. Note the date of the data available on the Internet. You are strongly urged to investigate the possibility that more recent data may be available on a local level from community agencies and organizations. These data, if properly collected, may be suitable for your use in completing the tables that have been provided. The instructions included in this section also provide suggested sources for obtaining local existing data.

## A.2 Tools for Collecting Socioeconomic and Demographic Data

The U.S. Census Bureau collects demographic and socioeconomic data from households every 10 years, with some information updated more frequently. You should begin by gathering demographic and socioeconomic information from the Census Bureau's Internet site.

1.  Go to **www.census.gov**.
2.  Click on **American Factfinder** in the left sidebar.
3.  In the top box labeled **Show me**, select **Age and Sex**.
4.  In box labeled **for**, select a **County**.
5.  Under this box, scroll to select the State in which your community is located.
6.  After selecting your State, a box will appear in which you can scroll to select your county.
7.  Repeat by selecting new profiles (**Poverty and Income** and **Labor Force and Occupations**).
8.  Review the census data that you retrieved to fill in the suggested data on the table shells. Include any additional indicators that might be helpful in your community.

**Table A.1. Demographic Profile of Your County (Based on 1990 Census)**

| Demographic Characteristics | Census Data Table | Number |
|---|---|---|
| **Total Population** | DP-1 | |
| | | |
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | DP-1 | |
| Female | DP-1 | |
| | | |
| **Household Structure** | | |
| Total households | DP-1 | |
| Persons per household | DP-1 | |
| **Family Households** | | |
| Married-couple families | DP-1 | |
| Other family, male householder | DP-1 | |
| Other family, female householder | DP-1 | |
| **Nonfamily Households** | | |
| Householder living alone | DP-1 | |
| Householder 65 years and over | DP-1 | |

| Demographic Characteristics | Census Data Table | Number |
|---|---|---|
| **Race/Ethnicity** | | |
| White | DP-1 | |
| African American | DP-1 | |
| American Indian | DP-1 | |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | DP-1 | |
| Other | DP-1 | |
| Hispanic origin (of any race) | DP-1 | |
| | | |
| **Age** | | |
| < 5 years | DP-1 | |
| 5–17 years | DP-1 | |
| 18–20 years | DP-1 | |
| 21–24 years | DP-1 | |
| 25–44 years | DP-1 | |
| 45–54 years | DP-1 | |
| 55–59 years | DP-1 | |
| 60–64 years | DP-1 | |
| 65–74 years | DP-1 | |
| 75–84 years | DP-1 | |
| 85 years and over | DP-1 | |

**Table A.2. Household Economic Profile of Your County (Based on 1990 Census)**

| Economic Characteristics | Census Data Table | Number |
|---|---|---|
| **Median Household Income** | DP-4 | |
| **Poverty Status** | | |
| Number of people of all ages below poverty level | DP-4 | |
| Number of related children under 18 years in poverty | DP-4 | |
| Number of related children ages 5 to 17 in families in poverty | DP-4 | |
| **Employment Status (total persons 16 years and over)** | | |
| In labor force | DP-3 | |
| In armed forces | DP-3 | |
| Civilian | DP-3 | |
| Employed | DP-3 | |
| Not employed | DP-3 | |
| Not in labor force | DP-3 | |

## A.3 Tools for Assembling a Profile of Community Food Resources

**Federal Food Assistance Program Resources**

Federal programs are funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) at the Federal level but administered locally by State and county agencies. The State or local agency responsible for administering the various food assistance programs varies by State. To collect data on the Federal food assistance programs, you should begin by contacting these State and local government agencies. USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) regional offices may be able to provide you with some program, information or local contacts for specific programs. You can find the regional offices' addresses and telephone numbers at www.fns.usda.gov/cga/Contacts/RegionalContacts.htm on the Internet. In addition, program contacts in your State can be located at the USDA FNS Internet sites listed in box A-1. Data on the availability of Federal food assistance programs in your community should be available by contacting the State and local offices in your community.

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**Box A-1**
**State and Local Agency Contacts for Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs**

**Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)**
www.fns.usda.gov/wic/menu/contacts/state/statealpha.htm

**Food Stamp Program**
www.fns.usda.gov/fsp

**National School Lunch Program; School Breakfast Program; Child and Adult Care Food Program; Summer Feeding Program**
www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm

**Emergency Food Assistance Program; Commodity Supplemental Food Program; Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations**
www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/MENU/CONTACTS/StateDistributingAgencies/fdsda1.htm

**Nutrition Services Incentives Program; Meals on Wheels**
Area Office on Aging
www.aoa.govfactsheets/enp.html

**WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program**
www.fns.usda.gov/wic/MENU/CONTACTS/farm/farm.htm

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**Table A.3. Federal Food Assistance Programs**

| Food Assistance Program | Program Participation (Total for All Sites) | Number of Enrollment Offices and/or Program Sites in Community |
|---|---|---|
| Food Stamp Program | | |
| Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) | | |
| National School Lunch Program | | |
| School Breakfast Program | | |
| Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) | | |
| Summer Food Service Program | | |
| The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) | | |
| WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program | | |
| Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) | | |
| Meals On Wheels | | |
| Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP) | | |
| Data source: | | |
| Name of data collector: | | |
| Date of data collection: | | |

**Table A.4. Location of Federal Food Assistance Programs**

| Food Assistance Program | Address, Telephone, and Contact Person Name |
|---|---|
| **Food Stamp Program:** Enrollment sites | |
| **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC):** WIC clinics | |
| **National School Lunch Program**: Participating schools | |
| **School Breakfast Program:** Participating schools | |
| **Child and Adult Care Food Program:** Participating providers | |
| **Summer Food Service Program:** Enrollment sites | |
| **Emergency Food Assistance Program:** Distribution sites | |
| **WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program:** Farmers' markets accepting coupons | |
| **Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations:** Distribution sites | |
| **Meals On Wheels:** Programs | |
| **Nutrition Services Incentives Program:** Congregate meal sites | |
| Data source: | |
| Name of data collector: | |
| Date of data collection: | |

**Retail Food Resources**

There are several sources of data on retail food stores in your community:

- USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Authorized Food Stamp Retailers database
- Yellow pages, hard copy or online; Mapquest

**USDA Authorized Food Stamp Retailers Database**

Because your community food security assessment is concerned primarily with low-income households, the best available data on retail food stores will come from USDA's FNS, which maintains a database of food stamp retailers authorized to accept food stamps. This database contains the store name, store location, store type, and total food stamp redemptions. Box A-2 explains retail store classifications.

This USDA authorized food stamp retailers database is available for your community at your local FNS field office. Call your FNS regional office for more information. The phone numbers for FNS regional fields offices can be founds at http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/Contacts/RegionalContacts.htm.

**Table A.5. Availability of Authorized Food Stamp Retailers**

| Food Store Type | Number of Retailers | Annual Food Stamp Redemptions ($) |
|---|---|---|
| Supermarkets | | |
| Groceries | | |
| Convenience and gas/grocery combinations | | |
| Specialty stores | | |
| Other food stores | | |
| Data source: | | |
| Name of data collector: | | |
| Date of data collection: | | |

**Yellow Pages**

Your local Yellow Pages directory on the Internet can be another valuable source of information on retail food stores. The Yellow Pages directory contains information on store name, store address and phone number, and a map of the store's location.

Access your local Yellow Pages directory of retail food stores using the directions below:

1. Go to **www.yellowpages.com**.
2. Type in **Food Stores**.
3. Select your **State** and **City**.
4. Select the store type desired. (Selecting Grocery Stores will get you to a list of supermarkets.)

**Mapquest**

Mapquest is another source of online information that can be used to list or to map the location of the retail food stores in your community.

Find retail food stores in your community using the directions below:

1. Go to **www.mapquest.com**.
2. In the boxes at the left, under locator—FIND A MAP, enter the name of the major city or town and your State.
3. Hit the **MAP IT** button.
4. Find **Shopping** under the map.
5. Select **show all locations** and **Supermarkets** and click on **Update Map**
6. Select **Big Map** under the Zoom In and Zoom Out vertical bar on the right.
7. The map that appears will show all the supermarkets in the county and close by counties.
8. Click on each icon to find location information for each store.

<div style="border:1px solid #000; background:#eaeaea; padding:1em;">

**Box A-2**
**Retail Store Classifications**

**Supermarkets**—offer a full range of foods
$2 million or more in annual gross sales (including nonfood items)

**Groceries**—offer a full range of foods
Annual gross sales (including nonfood items) less than $2 million

**Convenience stores and grocery/gas combinations**—offer a limited range of foods, usually excluding fresh foods. These stores are generally aimed at supplementing larger stores and providing convenience in terms of proximity to shoppers and hours.

**Specialty stores**—specialize in one or two product lines, such as produce, meats, or baked goods

**Other food stores**—includes health food stores, co-op food stores, produce routes, produce stands, general stores, and combination stores that sell food in addition to other goods

</div>

**Table A.6. Availability of Retail Food Stores Using the Yellow Pages or Mapquest**

| Food Store Type | Number of Retailers |
|---|---|
| Supermarkets | |
| Convenience stores | |
| Cooperative food stores | |
| Candy, nut, and confectionery stores | |
| Dairy products stores | |
| Fruit and vegetable markets | |
| Meat and fish (seafood) markets | |
| Miscellaneous food stores | |
| Retail bakeries | |
| Data source: | |
| Name of data collector: | |
| Date of data collection: | |

**Location of Food Resources**

To allow for mapping store locations by type of store and other community variables, it will be necessary to collect information on store addresses. Addresses for stores authorized to accept food stamps are included in the USDA retail database. Store addresses can also be found through a review of the local yellow pages or information available through the local chamber of commerce or other such community business representative organization.

**Table A.7. Location of Food Resources**

| Store Type | Store Name | Address | Zip Code | Phone |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Data source: |  |  |  |  |
| Name of data collector: |  |  |  |  |
| Date of data collection: |  |  |  |  |

**Consumer Food Cooperatives**

The following sources will help you to identify consumer food cooperatives in your community:

- Common Ground Food Co-op Directory
- World Share
- National Cooperative Business Association

Information on consumer food cooperatives can also be obtained from the Yellow Pages as described in the previous discussion on retail food sources.

**Common Ground Food Co-op Directory**

The Common Ground Food Co-op in Champaign, Illinois, publishes a Canadian and U.S. Food Co-op Directory. Although USDA has not reviewed the directory for accuracy, it may be a useful resource for locating food cooperatives in your community. To access the directory, follow the directions below:

1. Go to **www.prairenet.org/co-op/directory**.
2. Select a State.

**World Share**

World Share (Self-Help and Resource Exchange) is a nonprofit social business serving a multinational network of organizations strengthening their communities by helping people to help themselves and others.

To retrieve a listing of World Share's regional affiliates in the United States, follow the directions below:

1. Go to **www.worldshare.org**.
2. Select **SHARE** in the U.S.A.
3. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on the **SHARE** locator.

## National Cooperative Business Association

The Cooperative Web Site of the National Cooperative Business Association presents information about cooperatives to help people understand how they can use the cooperative model to improve their lives and their communities. The site provides information on the number and type of food cooperatives in the United States, including retail cooperative food stores, cooperative buying clubs or preorder co-ops, and cooperative food warehouses. It also provides contact information for cooperative food warehouses that will provide help in organizing a food co-op or joining an existing food cooperative in your community. To access the site, follow the directions below:

1. Go to **www.cooperative.org.**
2. Select **Food.**

## Table A.8. Food Cooperatives

| Food Cooperative | Type (Share affiliate, warehouse, retail) | Address |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Data source: |  |  |
| Name of data collector: |  |  |
| Date of data collection: |  |  |

## Farmers' Markets

There are several ways to identify the farmers' markets in your community. You should begin with the USDA Web site, which is updated annually. Because the information contained on the USDA Web site may not be the most recent, you may wish to verify the information by calling local resources, including your local extension service (see Government blue pages), State farmers' market representative, or local Chamber of Commerce.

To access the USDA Web site, follow the directions below:

1. Go to: **http://www.usda.gov.**
2. Click on **Agencies.**
3. Click on **Agricultural Marketing Service.**
4. Click on **Farmers' Markets.**
5. Click on **Find a Farmers' Market in your State.**
6. Click on your State**.**

**Table A.9. Farmers' Markets**

| Farmers' Market | Address | Zip Code |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Data source: | | |
| Name of data collector: | | |
| Date of data collection: | | |

## Emergency Food Assistance Resources

Because no comprehensive national list of food pantries, soup kitchens, or homeless shelters is available, such data are best obtained from local sources. The best place to start is with your local food bank or food rescue organization, which likely supply food distributed by food pantries, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters in your community. Data may also be available through your county human or social services department; churches, synagogues, and community centers; local reference librarian; or a special information hotline or outreach program that may exist in some communities.

To find a list of food banks and food rescue programs in your community follow the directions below:

1. Go to USDA's Gleaning and Food Recovery home page at **www.fns.usda.gov/fns/menu/gleaning/recover.htm.**
2. Select the publication *Waste Not, Want Not: Feeding the Hungry and Reducing Solid Waste through Food Recovery.*
3. Select the Adobe Acrobat PDF file.
4. Go to appendix B (page 34) Food Recovery and Gleaning State Resource List.
5. States are listed in alphabetical order.

**Table A.10. Emergency Food Assistance Providers**

| Type of Emergency Food Program | Number in Community |
|---|---|
| Food pantries |  |
| Soup kitchens |  |
| Shelters with meals for residents |  |
| Mobile kitchens |  |
| Food banks |  |
| Food rescue programs |  |
| Data source: | |
| Name of data collector: | |
| Date of data collection: | |

**Table A.11. Emergency Food Program Locations and Hours of Operation**

| Provider Name | Address | Phone | Contact Person | Hours Of Operation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

| Data source: |
|---|
| Name of data collector: |
| Date of data collection: |

## A.4 Tools for Assessing Food Resource Accessibility

**Location of Low-Income Neighborhoods**

The U.S. Census Bureau collects data on the number of persons living in poverty. These data are available at the national, State, county, ZIP Code, and census tract levels. In most cases, ZIP Code-level data should be sufficient for purposes of determining food resource accessibility. Unfortunately, the most recent data available at the county level or lower are from the 1990 census; however, data from the 2000 census should be available in the near future.

To access the census data by ZIP Code:

1. Go to **http://www.census.gov.**
2. Select **Gazetteer** under the **Geography** option.
3. Type in the ZIP Code that you want data for.
4. Click on **Search.**
5. Click on **STF3B** (Lookup 1990 census ZIP Code data).
6. Select tables P1 (Persons) and P117 (Poverty status in 1989 by age).
7. Go to top of page and click on **Submit**.
8. Select HTML format.
9. Click on **Submit.**

To calculate the percentage of persons in poverty, divide the number of persons in poverty by the total number of persons in the ZIP Code area.

**Table A.12. Persons in Poverty by ZIP Code**

| Zip Code | Total Number of Persons | Persons in Poverty | Percentage of Persons in Poverty |
|---|---|---|---|
| ZIP Code 1 | | | |
| ZIP Code 2 | | | |
| ZIP Code 3 | | | |
| ZIP Code 4 | | | |
| ZIP Code 5 | | | |
| ZIP Code 6 | | | |
| Data source: | | | |
| Name of data collector: | | | |
| Date of data collection: | | | |

**Private Transportation Resources**

The U.S. Census Bureau collects data on private vehicle ownership by households. These data are collected at the national, State, county, ZIP Code, and census tract levels. In most cases, ZIP Code-level data should be sufficient for purposes of determining food resource accessibility. To find data on private vehicle ownership in your community, follow the directions below:

1. Go to **http://www.census.gov.**
2. Select **Gazetteer** under the **Geography** option.
3. Type in the ZIP Code.
4. Click on **Search.**
5. Click on **STF3B** (Lookup 1990 census ZIP Code data).
6. Select tables H4 (Occupancy Status) and H37(Tenure by Vehicles Available: Occupied Housing Units).
7. Go to top of page and click on **Submit**.
8. Select HTML format.
9. Click on **Submit**.

**Table A.13. Private Transportation Resources**

| ZIP Code | Total Occupied Housing Units | Number of Housing Units Owning at Least One Vehicle |
|---|---|---|
| ZIP Code 1 | | |
| ZIP Code 2 | | |
| ZIP Code 3 | | |
| ZIP Code 4 | | |
| ZIP Code 5 | | |
| ZIP Code 6 | | |
| Data source: | | |
| Name of data collector: | | |
| Date of data collection: | | |

**Public Transportation Resources**

The American Public Transportation Association maintains links to local and State transportation Web sites, many of which provide detailed information on transit routes for your county, city, or municipality. For those communities for which data is not available, contact information is provided for your State transportation department. To access your State or local transportation Web site, follow the directions below:

1. Go to **http://www.apta.com.**
2. Select **United States Transit** from the left sidebar menu labeled **Web Sites.**
3. Select your State.
4. Select your county, city, or municipality.

**Table A.14. Public Transportation Resources**

| Public Transportation Resource | Origin and Destination of Route | Days and Frequency of Operation | Cost Per Ride |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bus 1 | | | |
| Bus 2 | | | |
| Bus 3 | | | |
| Bus 4 | | | |
| Train or subway 1 | | | |
| Train or subway 2 | | | |
| Train or subway 3 | | | |
| Train or subway 4 | | | |
| Data source: | | | |
| Name of data collector: | | | |
| Date of data collection: | | | |

**Paratransportation Resources**

Some data on paratransportation availability and routes may be available from your local or State transportation Web site as listed above. Other sources may include your local Yellow Pages, area agency on aging, and human or social services department.

**Table A.15. Paratransit Resources**

| Paratransit Resources | Routes | Days and Frequency of Operation | Cost Per Ride |
|---|---|---|---|
| Private paratransit services (supermarket vans, elderly transportation service) | | | |
| Door-to-door transportation services (excluding private taxicab services) | | | |
| Data source: | | | |
| Name of data collector: | | | |
| Date of data collection: | | | |

**Federal Food Assistance Program Administration**

A recently released toolkit from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service titled *The National Nutrition Safety Net: Tools for Community Food Security* is intended to help your community determine whether it is making full use of Federal food assistance programs. The toolkit contains a set of checklists you can use to assess how well your community uses USDA's food assistance programs. These checklists will help you spot potential barriers to participation that may cause eligible people to miss out on benefits. Examples from the checklist include the following:

✓ Does the food stamp office in your community make it convenient for working families to apply for food stamps by providing evening and weekend hours and by informing working people of their possible food stamp eligibility? Does any group or coalition in your community help the local food stamp office reach out to potentially eligible people?

✓ Does the school lunch program in your community take advantage of direct certification for certain students, reducing paperwork for both families and schools? Do your schools integrate student meal programs with nutrition education activities, helping children develop healthy lifelong eating habits?

To download the FNS toolkit from the Internet, follow the directions below:

1. Go to **http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsec.**
2. Scroll down to the publication *The National Nutrition Safety Net: Tools for Community Food Security.*
3. Select **Click Here** to browse through a Web-based version or **Click Here** to download a PDF file of the entire publication.

# A.5  Tools for Assessing Community Food Production Resources

This section discusses the tools needed to assess your community's local food production resources and marketing infrastructures, including the following:

- Local food production resources
    - ➢ Community gardens
    - ➢ School-based gardens
    - ➢ Community-supported agriculture programs
    - ➢ Farm type and acreage
    - ➢ Crop production
    - ➢ Dairies, fisheries, and livestock production
    - ➢ Food manufacturers and distributors

- Local food production and marketing infrastructures
    - ➢ Linkages between local food producers, food processors, food retailers, and other marketing outlets like local schools, prisons, and hospitals

**Local Food Production Resources**

Data on local food production resources will need to be patched together using a variety of sources. USDA collects data on farm indicators at the county level, including total farm acreage, change in

farm acreage, and crop production. The Department's National Agricultural Library maintains a list of community-supported agriculture programs around the country. Data on community and school-based gardens is not yet available from national-level sources and will have to be assembled using local informants.

**Community Gardens**

To develop a list of community gardens in your community begin by calling your local county cooperative extension service office. To find contact information for your county cooperative extension service, begin by contacting the State office at your local land-grant university:

1. Go to **www.reeusda.gov.**
2. Click on **State Partners**.
3. Click on **Your State** using the map provided.
4. Select the State Extension Service, for example, "University of Massachusetts Extension" or "Wisconsin Cooperative Extension."
5. Follow directions for contacting your county extension office. (This procedure will vary by State.)

At the national level, the American Community Gardening Association is developing a Web site that will provide a list of community gardens across the country. The address for this site is **www.communitygarden.org/information/index.html.**

**Table A.16. Community Gardens**

| Name of Community Garden | Address | Phone | Contact Person |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Data source: | | | |
| Name of data collector: | | | |
| Date of data collection: | | | |

**School-Based Gardens**

Data on school-based gardens will be most easily gathered by contacting your local school district or principals at individual schools in your community.

**Table A.17. School-Based Gardens**

| Name and Type of School | Address | Phone | Contact Person |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Data source: | | | |
| Name of data collector: | | | |
| Date of data collection: | | | |

**Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) Programs**

USDA's National Agricultural Library, Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC), maintains a list of community-supported agriculture programs nationwide. To access the list, follow these directions:

1. Go to **www.usda.gov.**
2. Select **Agencies, Services, and Programs** from the top menu bar.
3. Select **National Agricultural Library** under the **Research, Education, and Economics heading**.
4. Select **Services and Programs** from the left-side menu bar.
5. Select **Alternative Farming Systems Information Center**.
6. Click on **Community Supported Agriculture Information**.
7. Click on **State-by-State** listing under **Finding a CSA Farm Near You**.
8. Click on the name of your State.

**Table A.18. Community-Supported Agriculture Programs**

| Name of Farm and CSA Program | Address | Phone | Contact Person |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Data source: | | | |
| Name of data collector: | | | |
| Date of data collection: | | | |

**Commercial Agricultural Resources**

USDA collects data about farms, livestock producers, dairies, and their characteristics in years ending in 2 and 7 (i.e., 1992 and 1997) in the Census of Agriculture. These data are available at the national, State, and county level. Some examples of the type of data that might be appropriate for your community are listed in Table 19. Additional detail is available in the Census of Agriculture for your county. To retrieve the Census of Agriculture data, follow the directions below:

1. Go to **http://www.usda.gov.**
2. Select **Agencies**.
3. Select **National Agricultural Statistics Service** under the **Research, Education, and Economics** heading.
4. Select **Census of Agriculture**.
5. Select **Profiles** (for key indicators for your State and county) in PDF format.
6. Identify your **State** on the U.S. map.
7. Select your **County** or **Select Complete Volume** (for complete data on your State and county) in PDF format.
8. Select your State from the second box titled **State and County Geographic Area Series— State and County**.

**Table A.19. Commercial Agricultural Resources**

| Farm Type | Number of Farms | Acreage | Market Value of Products Sold |
|---|---|---|---|
| All farms | | | |
| Crop production | | | |
| Oilseed and grain farming | | | |
| Vegetable and melon farming | | | |
| Fruit and nut farming | | | |
| Other crop farming | | | |
| Cattle ranching and farming | | | |
| Dairy cattle and milk production | | | |
| Hog and pig farming | | | |
| Poultry and egg production | | | |
| Sheep and goat farming | | | |
| Animal aquaculture | | | |
| Other animal production | | | |
| Data source: | | | |
| Name of data collector: | | | |
| Date of data collection: | | | |

**Fisheries**

The U.S. Department of Commerce Fish and Wildlife Service collects data on fishery resources nationwide. To gather information on fishery resources in your community follow the directions below:

1. Go to: **http://www.fws.gov.**
2. Select **Fisheries.**
3. Select **Fisheries** again on the next page.
4. Select **National Fish Hatcheries** and **Fishery Stations Map.**
5. Select the box labeled **Region** (region number) RO. For example, for Region 5 (Northeast Region), you would select the box "Region 5 RO."
6. Select your State.
7. Select the Fisheries Office nearest you.

### Food-Related Manufacturing Establishments

The U.S. Bureau of the Census collects data on food manufacturers nationwide in years ending in 2 and 7 (i.e., 1987, 1992, 1997) in the Economic Census. These data are available at the national, State, and county levels on the Internet. Examples of the types of food manufacturing categories that are available in the Economic Census are listed in Table A-20. Additional industry categories are available for your community. Data may also be available locally from your Chamber of Commerce.

To retrieve the Economic Census data from the Internet, follow the directions below:

1. Go to **www.census.gov.**
2. Select **Economic Census** listed under **Business**.
3. Select **Manufacturing** on the right sidebar.
4. Select your State for a PDF file of State and County data.
5. Go to Table 1 for State-level data or Table 3 for County-level data.

**Table A.20. Food Manufacturing Establishments**

| Manufacturing Type | Number of Establishments |
|---|---|
| Food and kindred products, all | |
| Meat products | |
| Poultry and egg processing | |
| Dairy products | |
| Cheese, natural and processed | |
| Preserved fruits and vegetables | |
| Canned fruits and vegetables | |
| Frozen fruits and vegetables | |
| Grain mill products | |
| Cereals and other breakfast foods | |
| Data source: | |
| Name of data collector: | |
| Date of data collection: | |

**Food Wholesalers or Distributors**

The U.S. Census Bureau Economic Census series provides data on food and other types of wholesalers at the national, State, and county levels. Examples of food categories are listed in Table 21. Additional food categories are available for your community. The Economic Census data are available for years ending in 2 and 7, i.e. 1987, 1992, 1997, etc. Data are provided for three types of food wholesalers or distributors:

- Large distributors—more than 100 employees
- Medium distributors—20-99 employees
- Small distributors—1-19 employees

To retrieve these data from the Internet, follow the directions below:

1. Go to **www.census.gov.**
2. Select **Economic Census** listed under **Business**.
3. Select **Manufacturing** on the right sidebar.
4. Select your State for a PDF file of State and County data.
5. Go to Table 1 for State-level data or Table 3 for County-level data.

Additional data on food distributors located in your community may be available from the Chamber of Commerce.

**Table A.21. Food Wholesalers or Distributors**

| Type of Distributor | Total Number | Number of Small Distributors | Number of Medium Distributors | Number of Large Distributors |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Groceries and related products, all | | | | |
| Groceries, general line | | | | |
| Packaged frozen foods | | | | |
| Dairy products | | | | |
| Poultry and poultry products | | | | |
| Confectionery | | | | |
| Fish and seafood | | | | |
| Meat and meat products | | | | |
| Fresh fruits and vegetables | | | | |
| Data source: | | | | |
| Name of data collector: | | | | |
| Date of data collection: | | | | |

# Appendix B
# Focus Group Guides and Materials

# Appendix B. Focus Group Guides and Materials

## B.1 Steps To Get You Started When Conducting a Focus Group

People who collect data frequently conduct focus groups (or group interviews) to obtain insight into the personal views, practices, and experiences of a targeted audience. The membership of the group that is convened is clearly specified. The questions that are raised during a focus group all pertain to a particular topic or research question.

For each of your focus group sessions, you will ask 8 to 12 people in your community to take part in a group discussion about their experiences relating to particular topics. All members of the focus group will be asked to respond to a series of questions. There are no correct or incorrect answers to the questions.

Before you convene your focus group session, you must consider the following:

- **Who will conduct the focus group?** Focus groups are best if conducted by someone trained in facilitating group discussions. The person should be a good listener and should be able to identify key issues for deeper exploration, to engage all participants in the discussion, and to keep the discussion on track within the time limits. The facilitator should be empathetic but must remain objective throughout the focus group session.

- **Where do I hold a focus group?** Focus groups should be held in a safe and accessible central location. It is best if public transportation is available, but at a minimum parking should be available for participants. The environment should be a neutral one that allows participants to comfortably express themselves without receiving any visual or other reminders of a need for caution. Thus, when conducting a session on food assistance, it would not be wise to hold the session in a welfare office where food stamps are distributed. Examples of neutral locations may be a church or local community group meeting room.

- **What type of room setup works best?** Traditionally, focus groups are held in a conference room setting. It should have a table that is sufficiently large to allow participants to face each other when they speak.

- **What do I need in the room for the focus group?** The following equipment may be used for the focus groups:

  — Cassette tape recorders with a jack for an external microphone
  — External microphones (e.g., omni directional/boundary microphone)
  — Extension cords for tape recorders
  — Cassette audiotapes (4 per session)
  — Duct tape
  — Easel
  — Flip chart pad
  — Markers
  — Pens and note pads
  — Batteries for tape recorders (as backup)

— 3-prong electrical adapters

— Sign-in roster

— Blank name tent cards

- **Whom will I include in the focus group?** A focus group is most successful if the participants have enough in common to be willing to speak freely but have different experiences to offer. For example, if you are conducting a focus group on people's shopping experiences, you will want to include people who are responsible for the household food shopping, but people who may live in different neighborhoods and therefore shop at different stores. In a group discussing the community's local food system, you will want to include different types of food producers and distributors.

- **How many participants shall I have?** Although focus group participation is generally restricted to 8 to 12 respondents, you may vary this according to your needs. Just remember—if the number of respondents is too small, you may not get the desired free flow of responses. If it is too large, your moderator may have to play the role of "traffic cop," restricting private conversations and spontaneous responses.

- **How do I find participants?** Participants may be recruited using many different methods. You can stop people at a central location and ask them to answer a short questionnaire to see if they meet your criteria. This strategy, however, is very time consuming. It is easier to focus on finding the type of people you want in your group by recruiting people from specific locations where your target audience is likely to be. For example, if you want to speak to people who make the grocery and food decisions in low-income households, you should try to recruit people from supermarkets where low-income households are likely to shop. You might chose to stand at the store and recruit people, or you might place a flyer on the checkout counter that provides people with very general information about the topic, the need for participants, and an incentive to participate. A phone number for more information should be included. Another way to recruit people is to identify a neighborhood that you want to recruit people from and to either go house to house to ask people to participate or find phone numbers for the households and call them to request their participation.

- **Can someone from the community help me with recruitment?** Identifying a community liaison with connections to the groups of people you want to reach can be very helpful. This person can help you identify the best methods for recruitment in a community, and he or she also may be able to identify appropriate participants and because of an existing relationship, enlist their participation with greater ease. When using a community liaison, it is important to work together to establish recruitment parameters and to use an official screener so that personal biases do not influence the recruitment process.

- **How do I select participants?** To help you select participants, screeners provide a set of questions that identify the people who meet your criteria. The screener starts with a introductory script to use when first speaking to potential participants. It describes the group's purpose very generally and then asks for a person's willingness to answer a few questions. The questions are worded to automatically screen out people if they do not meet the specific criteria. Each group discussion requires the development of a new set of criteria and thus a new screener. For some discussions, food assistance program participation will be essential, whereas for others, income

and shopping store usage may be the most important criteria. Screeners have been developed for each focus group as needed. It is important to note that for some groups, screeners are not necessary. For example, key informants can be selected through a more direct method simply by determining who the people are in the community who would be most knowledgeable about the topic and who represent a selected group of organizations. Screeners are used when the participants are supposed to represent a much larger population group within the community.

- **How do we show our appreciation to participants?** Participants are the key ingredient to a successful focus group and deserve to be thanked in several ways. Along with offering a light meal or refreshments at a focus group meeting, it is also customary to reimburse participants for their time. The amount will depend on your community, the sponsoring organization's budget, and the difficulty you have in recruiting participants. Participant reimbursements can range from $15 to $50 or more. There are times when monetary payments are impossible, ill-advised, or undesirable. Participants in these situations may instead receive vouchers to be used at specific stores (grocery stores may be applicable in this case) or other such indirect payments. The payment type and amount should be planned before recruitment and should be mentioned to potential participants to entice them to attend the meeting. Payments must be consistent across all participants and groups within a community.

- **What will be discussed?** We have provided you with the questions. See the following focus group guides. You can also add questions that pertain to your specific community.

- **How do I keep the session moving?** There are two types of problems that you might have when conducting groups. One is that people can wander off the topic. It is important to keep people focused and to tell them up front that you will interrupt them if the discussion is going too far off topic. The other problem is getting people to discuss issues openly. Sometimes a question will not provoke people to respond adequately to an issue. You may have to rephrase the question or probe to get them to explore some related or underlying issues. For example, if people are silent when asked why they may not participate in a food assistance program, the probes might include: *Is it inconvenient for you to go to apply for the program? Did you ever have a problem when you applied? Are the benefits enough to provide you with help?* It is also important that participants know that their comments will be in confidence and will be reported anonymously.

- **What can I do to focus the discussion?** In addition to using the discussion guide, it is often necessary to use a blackboard or blank newsprint on an easel to present or develop a list of topics to be discussed in detail by the group. Prepared lists should be written before beginning the group. Lists to be developed by the group are written by the facilitator as he or she gathers information from participants. The interview guides provide suggestions regarding the use of these lists.

- **When do participants answer the surveys?** Surveys may be included in some focus group sessions, although often they are not necessary. When participants arrive, they can be given short surveys to complete. The surveys should be multiple choice in format and should not require a great deal of time. These surveys help to focus peoples' attention on the subject matter and provide more specific information to the data collectors.

- **How will the session be recorded?**  Generally, focus group sessions are audiotaped, thus allowing the sponsoring agency to listen to group reactions after the event. However, note takers can provide greater insight than can a tape recorder. The tape recording should be reviewed after the meeting to supplement the notes taken. Tape recorders often do not pick up sound as well as you might expect; therefore, it is important to consider the notes as the first source of information with the tape as backup. One or two individuals may be assigned the role of note taker. If sufficient resources are available, the tape could also be transcribed.

- **How should note takers record their notes?**  Note takers should focus on three things:
  1. *Observations of the group.* Are people excited or lacking in interest?  Do people have a lot to say, or are they reluctant to speak?  Are some people dominating the discussion while others are silent?  Is the group cohesive or are there great differences of opinion?
  2. *Quotes illustrating the varied opinions being presented.* There is much value in capturing the exact words that are used by participants. These words are the actual "data," the essence of the meeting. Try to capture as much of the conversation as possible using the exact words that people speak. These quotes will be included in the final report.
  3. *Summary of key discussion points.* As each question is posed, individuals will offer their opinions, but there is often some nonverbal communication that also relays the group's perceptions, feelings, and thoughts on the issue. These reactions should be captured by the note taker and summarized along with the general discussion. Note that the group does not have to reach consensus. The summary can give all sides of the issue.

- **How long is the focus group session?**  A focus group generally lasts about 1½  hours. It is not desirable to go beyond this time because interest may diminish and fatigue may set in. If you envision that the questions will take more than 1½  hours to answer, consider eliminating some questions.

- **How do I begin the focus group?**  The moderator will open the focus group by thanking all participants for volunteering the time to participate. The moderator assures participants that their responses will be held anonymous and that the data collected will be used for research/decision-making purposes. Then, before beginning to ask the set of questions, everyone introduces themselves and answers an ice-breaker question (e.g., what is your favorite food?, why do you like this community?)

- **How do I end the focus group?** Thank participants for coming and assure them that their responses will help you in making decisions that will assist households in the community get a sufficient amount and variety of food to feed their families.

## B.2. Key Informant Focus Group

**Date:**

**Moderator:**

**Number of Participants:**

The key informant focus group will help you to identify areas of concern within your community and to understand community food security issues from the perspective of community representatives. The information gleaned from this discussion will be used in shaping the assessment process to be used in your community. It also will help you begin to form an informal network that can provide assistance throughout the process and can help in publicizing and using the results.

Participants can include the following people:

- Clergy
- Political/community officials
- Food assistance providers
- Emergency food providers
- Community nutritionists
- welfare office staff
- Case/social workers
- Advocates
- Low-income household members

Using the categories above, review all the appropriate key players in your community. After creating a list of all people, select at least one representative from each group above. In addition, try to select people by gender and race or ethnicity to reflect the community in which you live.

We are including handouts that define key terms and issues to be discussed during the interview or focus group. We suggest that these materials be provided to people to read at the group session.

In addition, you can use the Discussion Guide for a Key Informant Focus Group during the interview. It can easily be augmented to reflect the particular concerns within your community.

**What Is Household Food Security?**
**Definitions From the Life Sciences Research Office**
(Anderson 1990)

**Food security**—Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum

- ❖ The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.
- ❖ An assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

**Food insecurity**—Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

**Hunger**—The uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food. The recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food.

## What Is Community Food Security?

Community food security is a relatively new concept with roots in a variety of disciplines, including community nutrition, nutrition education, public health, sustainable agriculture, and anti-hunger and community development. As such, no universally accepted definition exists.

Community food security can be viewed as an expansion of the concept of household food security. Whereas household food security is concerned with the ability to acquire food at the household level, community food security focuses on the underlying social, economic, and institutional factors within a community that affect the quantity and quality of food available and its affordability or price relative to the sufficiency of financial resources available to acquire it.

Policies and programs implemented under the community food security label address a diverse range of issues, including participation in and access to Federal food assistance programs, economic opportunity and job security, community development and social cohesion, ecologically sustainable agricultural production, farmland preservation, economic viability of rural communities, direct food marketing, diet-related health problems, and emergency food assistance access.

Communities may be considered to be food insecure if
- There are inadequate resources from which people can purchase foods;
- The available food purchasing resources are not accessible to all community members;
- The food available through the resources is not sufficient in quantity or variety;
- The food available is not competitively priced and thus is unaffordable to low-income households;
- There are inadequate food assistance resources to help low-income people purchase foods at retail markets;
- There are no local food production resources;
- Locally produced food is not available to community members;
- There is no support for local food production resources; and
- There is any substantial level of household food insecurity within the community.

## B.2-1 Discussion Guide for a Key Informant Focus Group

**Introduction**

Thank you for your willingness to take part in this group discussion. The purpose of the discussion is to explore each of your perceptions regarding the presence of food security in this community.

I'd like to begin by defining food security. The handouts I've given you define both household food security and community food security. Although they are integrally connected, they are also quite separate situations. For example, a household may be food insecure—household members may not be able to afford to purchase food from normal retail food outlets and they may have had to take several different actions to stretch their food or may have gone without food on numerous occasions. However, in the community, food may be affordable, available, and accessible through normal markets. That is, community food security may not be a problem, but some households in the community may be food insecure.

Let's try to discuss these two issues separately. First, let's talk about household food security:

1. Do you think that many households in the community have a problem with food security? What is the extent of the problem?

2. Why do you think that household food security is a problem? (That is, how do you see the problem manifest itself?)

3. How do people cope with the problem of food insecurity?

4. What are the contributing factors?

5. Now, let's talk about the community:

6. Do you think that food is accessible, available, and affordable in the community? (Probe to explain how it is or is not.)

7. Are there differences in different parts of the community?

8. What do you think are the biggest problems related to food security at the community level? Why do you think these exist?

9. How does the community address food insecurity? What resources are in place to avoid the problem if it doesn't exist?

10. What else could be done to improve the community's problems with food insecurity?

11. Who are the key players?

12. Are alternative food sources easily accessible and used in the community? What are they? Who organizes them?

13. Finally, I would like to focus on local food-related policies:

14. Are there any local ordinances or other policies that affect food production, distribution, and consumption? (e.g., zoning rules that affect supermarket development, food purchasing regulations for local schools or institutions, policies on the use of city-owned land for community gardens)

**15.** Are there any transportation policies that affect food access?

**16.** Are there any farmland preservation efforts?

**17.** Are there local funding sources for community food security-related activities?

**18.** Is there an integration of food-related issues into the community planning process?

## B.3 Focus Group on Household Food Security

**Date of Focus Group:** _____

**Focus Group Moderator:** _____

**Number of Participants:** _____

A focus group on household food security highlights the household-level experience with food insecurity and related coping mechanisms that may be used. Participants in these groups should include people at risk of experiencing food insecurity. Thus, the screener uses a rough income-level question to identify those who are most likely to be at risk because of income level, and a question on food satisfaction to identify those who apparently are not having any direct problem of food insecurity. People should be recruited from various segments within the community.

Included in the focus group materials are

- A recruitment flyer to distribute at central community locations
- A screener to use when recruiting focus group participants to ensure that participants will include people who have some degree of food insecurity
- A short survey and answer sheet to use with focus group participants to introduce the topic and gather personal information more confidentially than is possible in a group discussion
- A focus group moderator's guide to help structure the discussion

**DO YOU EVER HAVE PROBLEMS GETTING ENOUGH FOOD FOR YOUR FAMILY?**

**DO YOU EVER WORRY ABOUT HOW TO MAKE YOUR FOOD SUPPLY LAST LONGER?**

**If you answered yes to either question above and you live in (name of community), you may be able to join us for a group discussion on food use in your home.**

**For more information,
call (put in a name) at
(phone number).**

**Refreshments and a small participation award will be provided!**

## B.3-1  Screener for a Focus Group on Household Food Security and Coping Mechanisms

Hello, I'm calling from _____. We are conducting some group discussions to learn about the community's food resources. Part of that process includes speaking to people in our community about the food that is used in the household. Are you the person in the household who does most of the food shopping and preparation?  (IF NOT, REQUEST TO SPEAK TO THAT PERSON. ONCE SPEAKING TO THAT PERSON, REINTRODUCE). Would you be willing to answer a few questions?

    a.  Yes                         Interviewer Initials _____
    b.  No                          (Thank and terminate)

1.  Note gender:          Male _____    Female _____

2.  Have you recently been asked to participate in a group discussion on food assistance, food security, or anything else having to do with household food use?

    a.  No
    b.  Yes (Thank and end discussion)

3.  Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the last 12 months:

    a.  Enough of the kinds of food we want to eat
    b.  Enough but not always the kinds of food we want
    c.  Sometimes not enough to eat
    d.  Often not enough

4.  People do different things when they are running out of money for food in order to make their food or their food money go further. In the last 12 months, did you ever run short of money and try to make your food or your food money go further?

    a.  Yes
    b.  No

*IF Question 3 is "a" AND Question 4 is "b", thank and end discussion. Otherwise, continue.*

5.  How many people live in your household?

    a.  1 person
    b.  2 people
    c.  3 people
    d.  4 people
    e.  5 people

  f. 6 people
  g. 7 people
  h. 8 or more people

6. Can you please tell me, to the best of your knowledge, what the total, combined income was for all of the members of your household over the past year—was it:

For **1** person:
  a. less than $11,000[1]  or
  b. more than $11,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **2** persons:
  a. less than $15,000  or
  b. more than $15,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **3** persons:
  a. less than $18,000  or
  b. more than $18,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **4** persons:
  a. less than $22,000  or
  b. more than $22,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **5** persons:
  a. less than $26,000  or
  b. more than $26,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **6** persons:
  a. less than $30,000  or
  b. more than $30,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **7** persons:
  a. less than $33,000  or
  b. more than $33,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **8 or more** persons:
  a. less than $37,000  or
  b. more than $37,000 (Thank and end discussion)

We are conducting an informal discussion about food use in the household. The discussion will take place at _____ on _____. The discussion will last for approximately _____ hours. We will pay you _____ as a way of thanking you for participating in this discussion. Would you be interested in attending?

---

[1] Income levels should be updated annually.  This information can be found at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Internet site, http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty.htm

a. Yes   (Record name, age, address, phone number)
b. No    (Thank and end discussion)


Respondent's Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Phone Number: _____

## B.3-2  Short Survey on Household Food Security

A focus group on household food security will provide information on the magnitude of this group of people's food insecurity problems, how they cope with them, and their perceptions of how the community does and can impact household food security issues. However, the focus group will not provide information on how widespread food insecurity is within the community.

A short survey on household food security is included in this toolkit to use with focus group participants. The survey serves several purposes but also has some obvious limitations. First of all, the survey is an indirect way of helping participants to understand what is meant by food insecurity. Secondly, the survey provides insight into the food security status of the participants, which helps to put the answers to the focus group questions into context. However, the results should never be used to categorize the food security of the community. The results of a survey used with only 9 to 12 participants cannot be considered representative of the community.

The survey may best be administered in a group setting using a mixture of techniques. To ensure that all participants understand the questions, the facilitator can begin by reading each question out loud to the group. Participants can have a simple answer sheet with the question number and corresponding responses. (See the answer sheet provided with the survey.)  The facilitator should emphasize that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers, but simply that the responses given should come as close as possible to each person's actual experience. As each question is read, participants can mark the appropriate answer on the sheet. This can help to eliminate confusion over question meaning and skip patterns that exist in the survey.  When the facilitator is asked questions such as, "What does 'balanced meal' mean," he or she should reply "whatever it means to you; whatever you think it means."  (This is the same procedure followed by Census Bureau interviewers in collecting the national household food security data.

The survey, which is based on the food security survey developed by USDA and used in numerous national surveys, is quite easy to analyze. Detailed instructions are available in USDA's *Guide to Measuring Household Food Security, Revised 2000* and available at www.fns.usda.gov/fsec on the Web. Assuming that participants provide answers to all the questions, the following guidelines can be used to score household food security status. First, add the number of positive answers (items with the number "1" circled) from questions 2 to 16. Questions prior to question 2 are preliminary and not included in the scoring. Households without children answer fewer questions and are thus scored differently.

| Number of Positive Answers | | Food Security Status |
|---|---|---|
| Household With Children | Household Without Children | |
| 0–2 | 0–2 | Food secure |
| 3–7 | 3–5 | Food insecure without hunger |
| 8–18 | 6–10 | Food insecure with hunger |

## B.3-3 Short Survey Household Food Security Instrument

We would like to ask you a few questions about the food eaten in your household in the past 12 months and what you may have done to make sure that everyone in the household had enough food. Please read/listen to the question and then check the appropriate answer.

(Skip the shaded sections if you do not have children younger than 18 years old living in your household.)

**Part A**

Section 1

1. Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the past 12 months?

   Enough of the kinds of food we want to eat ........................... ❒
   Enough but not always the kinds of food we want ................. ❒
   Sometimes not enough to eat . ❒
   Often not enough to eat........................................................... ❒
   Don't know ............................................................................... ❒

   la. Here are some reasons why people don't always have enough or the kinds of the foods they want to eat. Please indicate if any of the following is a reason why YOU don't always have enough or the kinds of food you want.

   Not enough money for food.................................................. ❒
   Kinds of food I want are not available................................ ❒
   Not enough time for shopping or cooking........................... ❒
   Too hard to get to the store ................................................. ❒
   On a diet............................................................................... ❒
   No working stove available ................................................. ❒
   Not able to cook or eat because of health problems ............ ❒
   Don't know or not applicable .............................................. ❒

2.  People have made several statements about their food situation. For these statements, please indicate whether the statement was *often* true, *sometimes* true, or *never* true for your household in the past 12 months.

    The first statement is "I worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more." Was that *often* true, *sometimes* true, or never true for your household in the past 12 months?

    Often true.......................................................................... ❒
    Sometimes true................................................................... ❒
    Never true........................................................................... ❒
    Don't know.......................................................................... ❒

3.  "The food that we bought just didn't last, and we didn't have money to get more." Was that *often* true, *sometimes* true, or *never* true for your household in the last 12 months?

    Often true.......................................................................... ❒
    Sometimes true................................................................... ❒
    Never true........................................................................... ❒
    Don't know.......................................................................... ❒

4.  "We couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." Was that *often* true, *sometimes* true, or *never* true for your household in the last 12 months?

    Often true.......................................................................... ❒
    Sometimes true................................................................... ❒
    Never true........................................................................... ❒
    Don't know.......................................................................... ❒

5.  In the past 12 months, did you or other adults in your household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

    Yes................................................................ ❒ (Go to Question 5a)
    No .............................................................. ❒ (Go to Question 6)
    Don't know.................................................. ❒ (Go to Question 6)

5a.  [IF YES ABOVE, PLEASE ANSWER] How often did this happen—
almost every month, some months but not every month, or only 1 or 2
months?

Almost every month ................................................. ❏
Some months but not every month ......................................... ❏
Only l or 2 months ................................................. ❏
Never................................................................. ❏
Don't know or not applicable .............................................. ❏

6.  In the past 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there
wasn't enough money to buy food?

Yes ................................................................. ❏
No  ................................................................. ❏
Don't know ................................................................. ❏

7.  In the past 12 months, were you ever hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't
afford enough food?

Yes ................................................................. ❏
No  ................................................................. ❏
Don't know ................................................................. ❏

8.  In the past 12 months, did you lose weight because you didn't have enough money for
food?

Yes................................................................. ❏
No  ................................................................. ❏
Don't know................................................................. ❏

9.  In the past 12 months, did you or other adults in your household ever not eat for a
whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?

Yes................................................................. ❏
No  ................................................................. ❏ (Go to box 1)
Don't know................................................................. ❏ (Go to box 1)

9a.   [IF YES ABOVE, PLEASE ANSWER] How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or only 1 or 2 months?

Almost every month ...................................................... ❐
Some months but not every month ..................................... ❐
Only l or 2 months ....................................................... ❐
Never............................................................................ ❐
Don't know .................................................................. ❐

---

Box 1

Do you have children younger than 18 years old in your household?

❐  No      Thank you—you are finished with this survey.
❐  Yes     Please continue with Question 10.

---

The next questions are about children living in the household who are younger than 18 years old. If there are no children in your household, do not answer these shaded questions.

---

10.   "We relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed the children because we were running out of money to buy food." Was that *often* true, *sometimes* true, or *never* true for your household in the past 12 months?

Often true.................................................................... ❐
Sometimes true............................................................. ❐
Never true.................................................................... ❐
NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 ............................ ❐
Don't know.................................................................. ❐

11.   "We couldn't feed the children a balanced meal because we couldn't afford that." Was that *often* true, *sometimes* true, or *never* true for your household in the past 12 months?

Often true.................................................................... ❐
Sometimes true............................................................. ❐
Never true.................................................................... ❐
NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 ............................ ❐
Don't know.................................................................. ❐

12. "The children were not eating enough because we just couldn't afford enough food." Was that *often* true, *sometimes* true, or *never* true for your household in the last 12 months?

Often true.................................................................... ☐
Sometimes true............................................................ ☐
Never true.................................................................... ☐
NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 ............................ ☐
Don't know.................................................................. ☐

13. In the past 12 months, did you ever cut the size of any of the children's meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

Yes............................................................................. ☐
No ............................................................................... ☐
NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 ............................ ☐
Don't know.................................................................. ☐

14. In the past 12 months, did any of the children ever skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

Yes..................................................................☐ (Go to Question 14a)
No .................................................................. ☐ (Go to Question 15)
NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 ..............☐ (Go to Question 15)
Don't know......................................................☐ (Go to Question 15)

14a. [IF YES ABOVE, PLEASE ANSWER] How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or only 1 or 2 months?

Almost every month ................................................ ☐
Some months but not every month........................ ☐
Only l or 2 months.................................................. ☐
Never ....................................................................... ☐
Don't know............................................................... ☐

15. In the past 12 months, were the children ever hungry but you just couldn't afford more food?

Yes............................................................................. ☐
No ............................................................................... ☐
NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 ............................ ☐
Don't know.................................................................. ☐

16. In the past 12 months, did any of the children ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?

Yes............................................................................. ☐
No ............................................................................... ☐
NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 ............................ ☐
Don't know.................................................................. ☐

## B.3-4  Answer Sheet for Household Food Security Survey

Please indicate the correct answer for each question by circling the number in the right column labeled "answer #." Please circle only one number (answer) for each question except question 1a. Do not answer the shaded questions if there are no children younger than 18 living in your household.

| Question # | Answers | Answer # |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Enough of the kinds of food we want to eat | 1 |
| | Enough but not always the kinds of food we want | 2 |
| | Sometimes not enough to eat | 3 |
| | Often not enough to eat | 4 |
| | Don't know | 5 |
| | | |
| 1a. | Not enough money for food | 1 |
| | Kinds of food I want are not available | 2 |
| | Not enough time for shopping or cooking | 3 |
| | Too hard to get to the store | 4 |
| | On a diet | 5 |
| | No working stove available | 6 |
| | Not able to cook or eat because of health problems | 7 |
| | Don't know or not applicable | 8 |
| | | |
| 2. | Often true | 1 |
| | Sometimes true | 1 |
| | Never true | 2 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| | | |
| 3. | Often true | 1 |
| | Sometimes true | 1 |
| | Never true | 2 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| | | |
| 4. | Often true | 1 |
| | Sometimes true | 1 |
| | Never true | 2 |
| | Don't know | 3 |

**GO TO NEXT PAGE**

| Question # | Answers | Answer # |
|---|---|---|
| 5. | Yes | 1 |
| | No | 2 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| **Answer 5a only if answer to 5 is "Yes."** | | |
| 5a. | Almost every month | 1 |
| | Some months but not every month | 1 |
| | Only 1 or 2 months | 2 |
| | Never | 2 |
| | Don't know or not applicable | 3 |
| 6. | Yes | 1 |
| | No | 2 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| 7. | Yes | 1 |
| | No | 2 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| 8. | Yes | 1 |
| | No | 2 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| 9. | Yes | 1 |
| | No | 2 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| **Answer 9a only if answer to 9 is "Yes."** | | |
| 9a. | Almost every month | 1 |
| | Some months but not every month | 1 |
| | Only 1 or 2 months | 2 |
| | Never | 2 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| Box 1 | No children | You are done |
| | Children younger than 18 in household | Please continue |

**GO TO NEXT PAGE**

| Question # | Answers | Answer # |
|---|---|---|
| 10. | Often true | 1 |
| | Sometimes true | 1 |
| | Never true | 2 |
| | NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 | 3 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| 11. | Often true | 1 |
| | Sometimes true | 1 |
| | Never true | 2 |
| | NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 | 3 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| 12. | Often true | 1 |
| | Sometimes true | 1 |
| | Never true | 2 |
| | NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 | 3 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| 13. | Yes | 1 |
| | No | 2 |
| | NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 | 3 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| 14. | Yes | 1 |
| | No | 2 |
| | NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 | 3 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| **Answer 14a only if answer to 14 is "Yes."** | | |
| 14a. | Almost every month | 1 |
| | Some months but not every month | 1 |
| | Only 1 or 2 months | 2 |
| | Never | 2 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| 15. | Yes | 1 |
| | No | 2 |
| | NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 | 3 |
| | Don't know | 3 |
| 16. | Yes | 1 |
| | No | 2 |
| | NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 | 3 |
| | Don't know | 3 |

## B.3-5  Moderator's Guide for a Focus Group on Household Food Security

Thank you for agreeing to be part of a focus group on household food security. For those of you who have never participated in a focus group, I just want to tell you that it is a research technique commonly used in social science research to gather data from informed sources. Your answers to our questions should not be considered "right" or "wrong."  Rather, they are information that you can supply based on your experiences, observations, or feelings.

We are collecting information about households and their food usage—whether people have enough, why they may or may not, and what they do about it. We are working with a community group that wants to understand if our community needs to improve the food resources available for all people.

Please be assured that all your responses are confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only. Our summary report will make no references to names.

The purpose of this discussion is to help us understand how serious food insecurity and hunger may be in our community. Food insecurity refers to not having access to adequate amounts of affordable foods through normal means, such as buying food at supermarkets or farmers' markets or even gardening. Hunger is often the result when there is not enough food in a house for all the household members. We are conducting this group discussion as part of a larger effort to understand how much of a food insecurity problem there may be in our community and what we can do about it.

I want to start by saying how difficult it can be to discuss these issues publicly. But almost everyone, if not everyone, in this group is familiar with these problems. They are nothing to be embarrassed about. Your candid responses and discussion will be most helpful to us as we try to develop a community-based action plan.

Before we begin, let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. But instead of telling us just your name, why not tell everyone your name, how long you have lived in this area, and what your three most favorite foods are?

**Household Food Security**

Let's start by thinking back to this past year. Give some thought to the times when you either didn't have enough food for everyone in your home or worried about whether you would have enough food.

1. How many people would say that they either ran out or worried about running out of food during the past year?
2. I'm wondering about the frequency of these things happening. How many people would say that they either ran out or worried about running out of food every month?  Did these things happen at specific times of the month?  Or at certain times of the year?
3. How many people would say that they either ran out or worried about running out of food every month?  Do these things happen at specific times of the month?  Or at certain times of the year?
4. Do these events (running out of food or worrying about it) follow any pattern?  That is, does something else happen regularly that causes you to run out of food or to worry about it? (*Probe for: medical emergencies, large bills, helping family members with their needs, changes in job status*)

5. I'm wondering about what you do if there isn't enough food. Let's start by discussing the things you might do to make the food you have last longer. What are some of these things? *(Probe for: cut amounts of food, cut size of meals, skip meals, water down ingredients, eat cheaper foods like potatoes or pasta, serve less expensive foods, serve less nutritious foods because they are cheaper, serve children nutritious foods but eat less or less nutritious foods yourself)*

6. People sometimes go to different places to get enough food to go around when they are running short of money. What types of places have you gone to for food and how often? *(Probe for: food assistance programs, food pantry, soup kitchen, other "free" food resources).* Which of these places works the best for you? Why? Do they each have a different role—do you go to them at different times or use them differently?

7. You also may have a less formal "help" network, that is, people you know who will lend you money, give you food, feed you, or let you buy on credit. Can you describe some of these networks? Do you ever provide this type of support for family members or friends?

8. What would you say is most important in helping you cope with times when food or food concerns are a major problem?

9. We've focused up to this point on household issues and strategies. Switch your thinking a bit to the community. What do you think the community (government, businesses, people) could do to make it easier for people to get enough food? Think about how they could work to make food accessible, available, and affordable.

Thank you!

## B.4 Focus Group on Food Shopping Patterns

**Date of Focus Group:** _____

**Focus Group Moderator:** _____

**Number of Participants:** _____

A focus group on household food purchasing will provide information on shopping patterns and other resources used by community members to obtain food. It will also provide information on barriers that impact the use of resources. To gather the most information possible, participants should include people who shop at various stores or use various alternative food resources throughout the community.

The materials for this group include

- A recruitment flyer to be posted widely throughout the community (targeting food markets and resources)
- A screener to use for recruitment purposes to ensure that participants include users of various types of stores
- A focus group moderator's guide to help structure the discussion

**HELP US UNDERSTAND THE COMMUNITY WE LIVE IN!**

**Information Needed on**

**Food Shopping**
**Grocery Store Use**
**Other Local Food Sources**

**Do you live in (name of community)?**

**If you are interested in joining**
**a group discussion,**
**please call (put in a name) at**
**(phone number).**

**Refreshments and a small participation award will be provided!**

## B.4-2  Screener for a Focus Group on Food Shopping Patterns

Before beginning the screening process, select three markets that you would like to have representative shoppers from in the focus group. These should either be in three different neighborhoods or be three different types of stores (e.g., large supermarket, small grocery, or small convenience store). Place flyers [see sample] with critical information about the focus group at each store (after obtaining permission from the store manager), requesting that interested parties contact the group organizer. Alternatively, flyers can be distributed with each bag of groceries or left at the checkout counter. These may be more widely read than a flyer posted on a board. As people call, use the following screener to select participants. Choose approximately one-third of the people for the group from each store.

*Store A*  _____

*Store B*  _____

*Store C*  _____

Thank you for calling. We are conducting some group discussions to learn about the community's food resources. Part of that process includes speaking to people in our community about where they buy their food, why they go there, and what influences their use of different stores. Are you the person in the household who does most of the food shopping and preparation?  (IF NOT, REQUEST TO SPEAK TO THAT PERSON. ONCE SPEAKING TO THAT PERSON, REINTRODUCE.)

1.  Note gender:   Male  _____   Female  _____

2.  Have you recently been asked to participate in a group discussion on food purchasing, food security, or anything else having to do with household food use?

    a.  No
    b.  Yes (Thank and end discussion)

3.  How many people live in your household?

    a.  1 person                    e.  5 people
    b.  2 people                    f.  6 people
    c.  3 people                    g.  7 people
    d.  4 people                    h.  8 or more people

4.  From the following categories, please tell me what your household income was for the past year:

For **1** person:
    a.  less than $11,000$^2$  or
    b.  more than $11,000  (Thank and end discussion)

For **2** persons:
    a.  less than $15,000  or
    b.  more than $15,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **3** persons:
    a.  less than $18,000  or
    b.  more than $18,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **4** persons:
    a.  less than $22,000  or
    b.  more than $22,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **5** persons:
    a.  less than $26,000  or
    b.  more than $26,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **6** persons:
    a.  less than $30,000  or
    b.  more than $30,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **7** persons:
    a.  less than $33,000  or
    b.  more than $33,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **8 or more** persons:
    a.  less than $37,000  or
    b.  more than $37,000 (Thank and end discussion)

5.  Do you ever shop at

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. | Store A | ___Yes | ___No |
| b. | Store B | ___Yes | ___No |
| c. | Store C | ___Yes | ___No |

---

[2] Income levels should be updated annually.  This information can be found at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Internet site, http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty.htm

*Select approximately equal numbers of people for the group from shoppers at each store.*

We are conducting an informal discussion about food shopping for the household. The discussion will take place at _____ on _____. The discussion will last for approximately _____ hours. We will pay you _____ as a way of thanking you for participating in this discussion. Would you be interested in attending?

    a.  Yes  (Record name, age, address, phone #)
    b.  No   (Thank and end discussion)

Respondent's Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Phone Number: _____

## B.4-3 Moderator's Guide for a Focus Group on Food Shopping Patterns

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group session. For those of you who have never participated in a focus group, I just want to tell you that it is a research technique commonly used in social science research to gather data from informed sources. Your answers to our questions will not be considered "right" or "wrong." They are merely information that you will supply based on your experiences, observations, or feelings.

We are collecting information about shopping patterns—the stores you use and why—and about other places in the community that people might go for food. We are working with a community group that wants to understand if our community needs to improve the food resources available for all people.

Please be assured that all your responses are confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only. Our summary report will make no references to names.

Before we begin, let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. But instead of telling us just your name, why not tell everyone your name, how long you have lived in this area, and what your three most favorite foods are?

**Food Stores**

Let's start with some questions about food shopping:

1. There are many different types of stores you can shop at for food—large supermarkets, medium or small neighborhood grocery stores, warehouse stores, specialty stores (bakeries, butchers, fish markets), and gas station or convenience stores. I would like to find out about the types of stores used for the majority of your shopping.

*Use a printed list of food stores that all can see. This list should be developed beforehand to include all the stores in the area. Review the list with the group and categorize the stores into warehouse stores, large supermarkets, medium grocery stores, small grocery stores, and gas station or Seven-Eleven type stores.)*

Let's go through this list, and for each type of store, please raise your hand if it is the type of store you use to buy most of your household groceries? *(Next to each store type, write down the number of people who use it for their shopping.)*

2. Now let's now focus on the stores used by people for the majority of their food shopping. Why do you use these stores the most? *(Go through each store type selected separately and probe for convenience, variety offered, cleanliness, safety, location, etc.)*

3. How do you get to the store? Is transportation for shopping a problem? How long does it take you to get there?

4. How often do you do a big shopping for food (not counting trips for just a few items)? How many "fill-in" trips do you make (that is, trips for one or two small items)?

5.  Now think about all the different types of stores that you shop at. Are you satisfied with the stores you use most frequently?  (Probe for quality of food and service, location, cleanliness, food cost, and variety.)

6.  Are there other stores that you would rather use but that you don't?  Why not?  (Probe for transportation difficulty, cost and variety of food, don't accept food stamps, or hours of operation.)

7.  We are trying to understand why people shop the way they do. What influences the number of times you shop?  (Probe for transportation, storage, availability of stores or food in the stores).

There are several other places to get food for your household. I am curious to know how many of you use these resources and why or why not.

**Alternative Food Sources**

8.  Let's start with home grown or produced food. How many of you grow your own food in a home garden or fish or hunt for your food?  Why/why not?

9.  How heavily do you rely on these foods in your regular food supply?  At which times of the year?

10. Are there community gardens in your community?  (*Community gardens are gardens that are planned and maintained by community members.*) How many of you grow food in a community garden?  Why/why not?

11. How heavily do you rely on these foods in your regular food supply?  At which times of the year?

12. Do you regularly get food at no cost from neighbors or others you know who grow or hunt their own food?

13. Are there farmers' markets in your community?  Does anyone ever go to a farmers' market to buy food?  Why/why not?

14. Are there food co-ops in your community? *A food cooperative or co-op is an organization owned and controlled democratically by its members. It may be organized as a buyers club or a store where people who are not members may also shop.* Does anyone ever use food co-ops? Why/why not?

15. Are there any community-supported agriculture programs in your community? *Community-supported agriculture (CSA) is a partnership between a farm and community members. Members support the farm by paying a set fee that is used to help pay for seeds, fertilizer, water, equipment maintenance, labor, etc. In return, the farm provides, to the best of its ability, a healthy supply of seasonal fresh produce throughout the growing season.*

16. Does anyone belong to this program?  Why or why not?

**General Reflection**

**17.** Now one last question. Imagine that you have the opportunity to do something in the community to help people have an easier time getting the types of foods that they want or need. What would you do? *If no one makes suggestions, probe for the following:*

- Bring stores closer to our homes.
- Try to get the foods we want available in the stores.
- Establish and enforce standards of cleanliness for stores.
- Provide public transportation to the large supermarkets.
- Start a food co-op.
- Start farmers' markets in the community.
- Create outreach programs for alternative resources.
- Establish a community garden.

## 18. B.5  Focus Group on Household Food Assistance

**Date of Focus Group:** _____

**Focus Group Moderator:** _____

**Number of Participants:** _____

The focus group on household food assistance will provide information on residents' experiences with food assistance programs. Participants will include people in the community who have participated in at least one of the following food assistance programs:

- Food stamp program
- WIC
- Free or reduced school lunch or breakfast
- Food pantries/soup kitchens

For each of the programs listed above, the focus group should include at least two people who have participated in the program or whose family members (children) have participated. The materials provided to assist you with this group include the following:

- A recruitment flyer to be distributed in locations across the community where program users might see them
- A screener to be used for recruiting participants who have used an array of programs
- A moderator's guide to help structure the discussion

# HELP WANTED:

**People are needed to participate in a group discussion on food assistance programs.**

**If you have ever used or applied for**

- **Food stamps**
- **WIC**
- **Free or reduced school meals**
- **Food pantries or soup kitchens**

**and you live in (name of community), you may be able to join us for a group discussion on food assistance programs.**

**For more information,**
**call (put in a name) at**
**(phone number).**

**Refreshments and a small participation award will be provided!**

## B.5-2  Screener for a Focus Group on Household Food Assistance

Hello, I'm calling from _____. We are conducting some group discussions to learn about the community's food resources. Part of that process includes speaking to people in our community about their experiences with food assistance programs like food stamps, WIC, free or reduced school meals, and food pantries or soup kitchens. Could I speak to the person in the household who would apply for nutrition assistance?  (ONCE SPEAKING TO THAT PERSON, REINTRODUCE.)  Would you be willing to answer a few questions?

    a.  Yes   Interviewer Initials _____
    b.  No   (Thank and end discussion)

1.  Note gender:  Male _____       Female _____

2.  Have you or anyone in your household ever inquired about, applied for, or participated in any of the following programs:

    a.  Food stamps                            ___Yes        ___No
    b.  WIC                                     ___Yes        ___No
    c.  Free or reduced school lunch or breakfast     ___Yes        ___No
    d.  Food pantries/soup kitchens             ___Yes        ___No

*If people have NO experience in any way with food assistance programs, thank them and end the discussion. The group should include people who have had experience with at least one program, and all programs should be represented by participants.*

3.  Have you been asked recently to participate in a group discussion on food purchasing, food security, or anything else having to do with household food use?

    a.  No
    b.  Yes (thank and end discussion)

We are conducting an informal discussion about the use of these food programs. The discussion will take place at _____ on _____. The discussion will last for approximately _____ hours. We will pay you _____ as a way of thanking you for participating in this discussion. Would you be interested in attending?

    a.  Yes  (Record name, age, address, phone number)
    b.  No   (Thank and end discussion)

Respondent's Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone Number: _____

## B.5-3  Moderator's Guide for a Focus Group on Household Food Assistance

Thank you for agreeing to be part of a focus group on your experiences with household food assistance programs. For those of you who have never participated in a focus group, I just want to tell you that it is a research technique commonly used in social science research to gather data from informed sources. Your answers to our questions will not be considered "right" or "wrong." They are merely pieces of data that you will supply based on your experiences, observations, or feelings.

We are collecting information about food assistance. We are working with a community group that wants to understand if our community needs to improve the food resources available for all people.

Please be assured that all your responses are confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only. Our summary report will make no references to names.

The purpose of today's discussion is to find out about your experiences with the programs—what has been most helpful and what has been most problematic. I recognize that everyone may not have had experiences with each of the different programs, so please be patient when we discuss a program that you haven't used. We will begin by talking more generally about food assistance programs in the community and then focus on specific programs.

Before we begin, let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. But instead of telling us just your name, why not tell everyone your name, how long you have lived in this area, and what your three most favorite foods are?

1.  Let me start by asking you to list all the food assistance programs that you have participated in while living in this community. (WRITE THE LIST ON A BOARD OR NEWSPRINT.) (Probe to be sure that all major programs are included: food stamps, WIC, school breakfast and lunch, and elderly meals. Accept the inclusion of emergency food programs such as pantries, food banks, soup kitchens, and daycare, after school, and summer program snacks and lunches.)

Now I would like to ask you some questions about food assistance in general. At this point, let's focus on some specific Government-sponsored programs like food stamps, WIC, and school meals. Do not include food pantries, banks, soup kitchens, and other community-based emergency food programs.

2.  How important are food assistance programs to your household?  What makes them important?

3.  What would you say are the best features of the food assistance programs you use?  That is, what makes them really work for you?  (Probe for staff attitude, location, easy access)

4.  What are some problems you have had when using or trying to use the food assistance programs?

Now I want to spend a little time focusing on specific programs:

Let's think about the food stamp program.

5.  What are the best features of this program?

6. What are some reasons why you may not be participating in the program or problems that you have with the program? (Probe for transportation problems, eligibility, lack of comfort using the food stamps, the application process, attitudes of food stamp office staff, didn't know about the program, etc.)

Now let's talk about the WIC program:

7. What are the best features of this program?

8. Why have you or family members not participated in WIC, or what problems have you encountered? (Probe for transportation problems, eligibility, lack of comfort using the WIC coupons, the limitations of the coupons, the application process, attitudes of WIC office staff, didn't know about the program, etc.)

Let's focus on school breakfast and lunch programs:

9. What are the best features of this program?

10. What problems have you had with these programs, or why haven't your children participated in them? (Probe for school not offering the program, eligibility, program costs too much, the application process, children embarrassed, children unwilling to eat the food, didn't know about the program, etc.)

What about meals programs for the elderly, like Meals on Wheels or congregate meal programs?

11. What are the best features of this program?

12. Are there reasons why you or elderly members of your family have decided not to participate in these programs? (Probe for no available program, didn't know about the program, don't like the food, food isn't appropriate for health needs, etc.)

I would like to shift the discussion to emergency food programs (soup kitchens and pantries).

13. Has anyone used emergency food providers in the community like (*name the emergency food programs in your community)*? (Food pantries, soup kitchens) Why or why not? (Probe for didn't need it, not comfortable getting free food, transportation, food quality, program environment, safety, hours of operation).

14. How much do you rely on emergency food providers for food assistance?

15. Would you seek help at emergency providers before applying for food assistance programs? Why or why not?

**General Reflection**

**16.** Now one last question. Imagine that you have been given the money and opportunity to do something in the community to help people use food assistance programs to the best degree possible. What would you do? *If no one makes suggestions, probe for the following:*

- Outreach or information programs
- Application assistance programs
- One application for all programs
- Change in hours of program operation
- Transportation improvements
- Training for professional staff on the programs and on the community's culture

## B.6 Focus Group on Community Food Production Resources

**Date of Focus Group:** _____

**Focus Group Moderator:** _____

**Number of Participants:** _____

This focus group with help you gather information on how local food producers are involved in helping to ensure that the community is food secure. It will gather information from both the food producers and others involved in the local food system. These people include the following:

- Local farmers
- Farmers at farmers' markets
- Community-supported agriculture
- Community gardens
- Local dairies
- Local fisheries
- Local food producers
- County extension agents
- Food systems activists

Participants will be selected from a list of all potential candidates. If the list is 15 people or fewer, include all people. If it is more than 15 people, select at least one representative from each type of group available. No more than 15 people should be included in one group discussion. You might want to speak to everyone by conducting two separate groups, or you might want to randomly sample people in each category. Start by separating the list into categories. Select the people from each category by choosing every other person, until the full list is between 12 and 15 people. Have substitutes ready in case some selected people are unable to attend the group.

Before beginning the focus group, you may want to distribute definitions of food security and other relevant topics. This step can help to focus the discussion, and participants can refer to the materials as the moderator uses the guide to discuss issues of community food production as they relate to community food security. These definitions are included in the toolkit with materials for the key informant focus group.

## B.6-1 Moderator's Guide for a Focus Group on Community Food Production Resources

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group session. For those of you who have never participated in a focus group, I just want to tell you that it is a research technique commonly used in social science research to gather data from informed sources. Your answers to our questions will not be considered "right" or "wrong." They are merely pieces of data that you will supply based on your experiences, observations, or feelings.

We have been asked by the community to collect this data so that it can consider ways to improve the system now being used to ensure that every household gets the foods they require and in the quantities that they need.

Please be assured that all your responses are confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only. Our summary report will make no references to names.

I'd like to begin by defining food security. I have handed out some long definitions that define both household food security and community food security. Although they are integrally connected, they are also quite separate situations. For example, a household may be food insecure—its members may not be able to afford to purchase food from normal retail food outlets, and they may have had to take several different actions to stretch their food or may have gone without food on numerous occasions. However, in the community, food may be affordable, available, and accessible through normal markets. That is, community food security may not be a problem, but some households in the community may be food insecure.

Local food producers help to ensure community food security by producing food locally and making it available to community members. Today we are going to focus on the local food system, that is, local food producers and distributors and their relationship with the community.

Before we begin, let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. But instead of telling us just your name, why not tell everyone your name, how long you have lived in this area, what you like most about being involved in food production or distribution, and what you like least?

1. Let's start by listing all the local food producers, processors, and distributors in the community. (Probe to include community-level organizations not just industry.)

2. What is your involvement with the local food system? (Probe for selling food through it, buying food through it, providing financial or other organizational support.)

3. Have there been any major changes in food production resources? (Probe for loss of farmland, farm startups, use of sustainable production methods.)

4. What types of resources exist to help make locally produced food available to the community? (Probe for direct marketing outlets [such as farmers' markets, roadside stands, pick-your-owns] and contract sales to local food stores, restaurants, schools, colleges, hospitals, or prisons and CSA programs.)

5. Do you think there is local government support for community efforts such as farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, community gardens, etc.? By this I mean political and economic support?

6. Who are the major community supporters of the local food system?

7. Are community residents involved in developing and running the system? How frequently do they use community food producers or markets?

8. What are the major barriers to making the community food system as successful as possible?

9. Are there any mechanisms in place to make these resources available to low-income residents? (Probe for subsidized shares in CSA, locating farmers markets near low-income neighborhoods.)

10. What changes can you suggest that would improve the local food system?

# Appendix C
# Food Store Survey Instrument and Materials

► C.1  Steps To Get You Started When Conducting a Food Store Survey

► C.2  Survey Preparation Guide

► C.3  Instructions for Data Collection

► C.5  Instructions for Data Analysis

► C.6  Food Store Survey Instrument and Materials

# Appendix C.  Food Store Survey Instrument and Materials

## C.1  Steps to Get You Started When Conducting a Food Store Survey

USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) has developed a food store survey instrument to help you assess the availability and affordability of food in retail outlets in your community. The following tools are provided:

- Step-by-step guide to survey preparation
- Data collection instructions
- Data analysis instructions
- Survey instrument

## C.2  Survey Preparation Guide

This survey preparation guide contains information on the following topics:

- Store selection
- Sampling procedures
- Informing store managers

**Store Selection**

The first step in conducting a food store survey is to decide which stores you will include in the survey. Consult the data that you entered into tables 5-8. These data will tell you the number, type, and location of food stores in your community and, in some cases, total food stamp redemptions. They will serve as a basis for your selection of specific stores to be interviewed. Where resources are limited, it may be a good idea to limit your food store survey to supermarkets and large grocery stores.

**Box C-1**
**Distribution of Food Stamp Authorized Retailers and Food Stamp Redemptions**
**by Store Type, 1996–1998**

| Type of Store | Percentage of All | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | **Stores** | **Redemptions** |
| Supermarket | 14.9 | 78.3 |
| Large Grocery | 7.0 | 5.8 |
| Small Grocery | 20.0 | 5.2 |
| Convenience | 26.8 | 3.3 |
| Specialty | 9.0 | 3.7 |
| Gas/grocery | 11.9 | 1.2 |
| Other types | 10.4 | 2.5 |
| **Total** | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source: T. Macaluso, "The Extent of Trafficking in the Food Stamp Program: An Update," Office of Analysis and Evaluation, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, March 2000.

Once you've decided what type of store(s) to survey, you will have to determine whether you have the resources to visit all food stores in your community or whether it will be necessary to select a sample of the stores to visit. ERS estimates that it will take between 30 minutes to 1 hour to conduct a food store survey depending on the experience level of the data collector and the store size.

If sampling is necessary, determine a total number of stores that you will be able to visit in each category. Then, follow the sampling instructions provided in the next section.

**Sampling Procedures**

Assume that the following is an alphabetized of supermarkets and large grocery stores in your community:

| | |
|---|---|
| Flanagan's | Shop'N Fresh |
| Food Lion | Shoppers Food Warehouse |
| Giant | Shopper's World |
| Price Chopper | Super Fresh |
| Piggly Wiggly | The Grocery Mart |
| Safeway | |
| Shop & Stop | |

There are enough resources to interview only four stores. To determine which stores will be visited follow the procedure below:

- A count of the stores (from the alphabetized list) indicates that there are 12 grocery stores in your community.
- Since only 4 are to be included in the sample, 12 is divided by 4. The resulting number, called the sampling number, is 3.
- Beginning at the top of the list, the providers are counted and marked by three's.
- Each store marked with a "3" is a provider to be interviewed. The providers in **bold** below are those selected for an interview:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Flanagan's | 1 | Shop & Stop | 1 |
| Food Lion | 2 | Shop 'N Fresh | 2 |
| **Giant** | **3** | **Shoppers Food Warehouse** | **3** |
| Price Chopper | 1 | Shopper's World | 1 |
| Piggly Wiggly | 2 | Super Fresh | 2 |
| **Safeway** | **3** | **The Grocery Mart** | **3** |

After you have selected the stores to be surveyed, it would be good to start developing your tracking system for the survey, especially for recording all the information about stores that have agreed to participate and the identification (ID) number assigned to them. See the table below.

**Table C.1.  Store Survey Tracking System**

| Store name | Store type | Store ID number | Letter of introduction mailed (date) | Followup phone call (date) | Data collected (date) | Name of data collector |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Giant | Supermarket | 01 | | | | |
| Flanagans | Large grocery | 02 | | | | |
| Shoppers World | Large grocery | 03 | | | | |
| Safeway | Supermarket | 04 | | | | |

**Informing the Store Manager**

The way in which you approach food store managers to ask permission to conduct surveys in their stores is key to gaining their compliance. Guidelines for a sample introductory letter are provided below. However, since each community is unique, you may find that you want to change some or all of these procedures to those that you think will work best in your community.

The introductory letter…

- Send a letter to the grocery store managers/owners to explain the study and to ask for permission to survey their grocery store.
- Keep a copy of this letter to present to the manager/owner upon arrival at the store for the survey.
- For stores that are members of a regional or national grocery chain, call the chain's headquarters to find the appropriate person to contact. Write a letter to the representative from headquarters to explain the study.
- Request that permission to collect the data be sent to you in a letter written on company letterhead.
- Follow up with a letter to the manager/owner of the individual store to be surveyed. (Include a copy of the letter from headquarters).

About a week before the survey…

- Follow up on your letters by calling the grocery store manager/owner.
- Reiterate the purpose of the data collection and assure store managers/owners that you are in no way evaluating the store or its policies.
- Relieve any anxieties that the managers/owners may have about their participation by providing the following assurances: (1) the store name, policies, and prices will not be published or publicized; (2) interviewers will not disrupt the normal flow of business by speaking with customers or employees; and (3) staff involvement in the survey process will be kept to a minimum.

- Inform store managers/owners that findings from individual stores will be completely confidential. Assure them that the information gathered from individual stores will be combined with that from many other stores and that the final results will be reported in statistical form only (i.e., percentages and totals). NOTE: Every member of the research team must adhere to the rules of confidentiality. This means that team members must never divulge names or factual information about any store survey.
- Arrange for a date and time for the surveyor's arrival. (If the name of the surveyor(s) is known at this time, provide the manager with this information as well.)
- Explain the manager's/owner's role in the survey process. Ideally, it will be to

   — Meet with the surveyor(s) for about 5 minutes before data collection to allow the surveyor to repeat the purpose of data collection
   — Meet with the surveyor(s) at the end of data collection to answer questions about items that were not found or were unavailable on the day of the visit

## C.2 Instructions for Data Collection

Begin your data collection by filling in the information requested on the cover page of the Food Store Survey form on page 154. The item "Store Type" should be filled in using the definitions in appendix A, box A-2. The "Store ID Number" should be taken from the store survey tracking system. (See table C.1 on the previous page.)

**Food Availability**

The food items on the survey instrument were selected to be representative of foods commonly eaten by low-income households and to meet Federal dietary guidelines and Food Guide Pyramid serving recommendations for a family of four (two adults aged 20 to 50 and two children aged 3 to 5 and 6 to 11) for 1 week. It is strongly recommended that no substitutions be made to the listed food items in order to maintain the integrity of the survey in terms of dietary recommendations, food groups, and the basic Thrifty Food Plan recipes that were used as a basis for the store survey list.

However, we recognize that each region or community may have specific food preferences and that certain items on the survey list may not be available in the community. Box C-1 lists some possible substitutions for selected food items. Although these substitutions do not reflect official USDA dietary recommendations, they may, in some cases, allow the survey to better represent food access in special communities. If the decision is made to make substitutions, it is important that changes be consistent throughout the community (i.e., information on the same set of items must be collected from each store). To ensure this consistency, you should revise the list of food items in the survey instrument provided in the toolkit to reflect these substitutions.

The survey instrument includes the unit of measure that should be selected for each food item. For example, potatoes are measured in pounds, eggs are measured by the dozen, peaches are measured in a 29-ounce can. Package sizes were selected to approximate the quantity of each item needed to prepare the Thrifty Food Plan recipes on which the food list is based. Package sizes were also

selected to provide consistency across store types in product selection. The purpose of this approach is to limit measured price difference due solely to differences in the package size of items offered for sale. Alternatively, a pricing methodology that selects the lowest priced item in a food category, without regard to package size, will often result in a comparison of small sizes of branded items in small food stores to large sizes and private-label or generic items in large supermarkets.

**Missing Items**

If an item is not available in the package size listed, you may substitute another size, but be sure to note the new package size on the survey instrument in the column titles "Item Weight/Unit (actual)." If it appears that the item is usually available but out of stock on the day of your visit, record the price of that item, but note that it was missing by putting the letter "m" next to the price. You may also find it useful to check the status of such items with the store manager.

If an item is not available at all, in any package size, and is not usually stocked by the store, record an "NA" in the column labeled "Price."

| Box C-2 List of Food Items and Possible Substitutions for Food Store Survey Instrument | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Survey Food Item | Thrifty Food Plan Food Group | Suggested Substitute(s) |
| **Fresh fruits and vegetables** | Fruits and vegetables | |
| Apples, any variety | Noncitrus fruits and juices | |
| Bananas | " | Plantains |
| Grapes (green/red) | " | |
| Melon (cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon, other) | Citrus fruits, melon, berries, and juices | |
| Oranges, any variety | " | Grapefruit |
| Carrots | Dark green/deep yellow vegetables | |
| Celery | Other vegetables | |
| Green pepper | " | |
| Lettuce, looseleaf (green/red) | Dark green/deep yellow vegetables | Spinach; romaine lettuce, collard, mustard, turnip or beet greens; chard; bok choy[1] |
| Onions, yellow | Other vegetables | |
| Potatoes, any variety | Potato products | |
| Tomatoes, any variety | Other vegetables | |
| Canned fruits and vegetables | Fruits and vegetables | |
| Oranges, mandarin, juice or light syrup | Citrus fruits, melon, berries, and juices | Strawberries, frozen; blueberries, frozen |
| Peaches, juice or light syrup | Noncitrus fruits and juices | Pears, juice or light syrup |
| Mushrooms, pieces | Other vegetables | Mushrooms, whole |
| Spaghetti sauce | " | Salsa |
| Tomato sauce | " | Salsa |
| Frozen fruits and vegetables | Fruits and vegetables | |

| Box C-2 | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **List of Food Items and Possible Substitutions for Food Store Survey Instrument** | | |
| **Survey Food Item** | **Thrifty Food Plan Food Group** | **Suggested Substitute(s)** |
| Orange juice, concentrate | Citrus fruits, melon, berries, and juices | Grapefruit juice concentrate |
| Broccoli, chopped | Dark green/deep yellow vegetables | Spinach, chopped, kale chopped, collard, mustard, beet, turnip greens, chopped, frozen |
| Green beans, any variety | Other vegetables | Corn; okra; snow peas; frozen |
| Green peas, any variety | Other vegetables | Corn; okra; snow peas, frozen |
| French fries, any variety | Potato products | |
| **Breads, cereals, other grain products** | Grains | |
| Bread, white, enriched | Breads, yeast and quick | Flour tortillas, enriched; pita bread, white, enriched |
| Bread, whole wheat, enriched | " | Corn tortillas, enriched; whole-wheat pita bread, enriched |
| Hamburger buns, enriched | " | Flour tortillas, enriched; pita bread, enriched |
| Dinner rolls, enriched | " | Flour tortillas, enriched; pita bread, enriched |
| French or Italian-style bread, enriched | " | Flour tortillas, enriched; pita bread, enriched |
| Bagels, plain, enriched | " | English muffins, plain, enriched |
| Bread crumbs, plain | " | Bread crumbs, flavored |
| Ready-to-eat cereal, corn flakes | Breakfast cereals, cooked and ready to eat | Ready-to-eat cereal, bran flakes |
| Ready-to-eat cereal, toasted oats | " | |
| Macaroni, elbow style, enriched | Rice and pasta | Macaroni, any style, enriched; Asian-style noodles, enriched |
| Noodles, yolk-free, enriched | Rice and pasta | Macaroni, any style, enriched; Asian-style noodles, enriched |
| Popcorn, microwave, unpopped | Grain-based snacks and cookies | Regular popcorn |
| Rice, white, long grain, enriched | Rice and pasta | Rice, white, short grain, enriched |
| Spaghetti, any variety, enriched | " | Macaroni or pasta, any style, enriched; Asian-style noodles, enriched |
| **Dairy products** | Milk products | |
| Milk, 1% lowfat | Lower fat skim milk and lowfat yogurt | Milk, skim |

| | Box C-2<br>**List of Food Items and Possible Substitutions for Food Store Survey Instrument** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Survey Food Item** | **Thrifty Food Plan<br>Food Group** | **Suggested Substitute(s)** |
| Milk, whole | Whole milk, yogurt, and cheese | Milk, 2% fat |
| Cheese, cheddar, any variety | Cheese | |
| Cheese, cottage, lowfat | " | |
| Cheese, mozzarella, part skim, whole style, not shredded | " | Cheese, mozzarella, part skim, shredded |
| Evaporated whole milk | Whole milk, yogurt, and cream | Evaporated skim milk |
| **Meat and meat alternates, fresh** | Meat/meat alternates | |
| Beef, ground, lean | Beef, pork, veal, lamb and game | Do not substitute regular ground beef[2] |
| Chicken fryer, cutup or whole | Chicken, turkey, and game birds | Chicken, any style |
| Chicken thighs, boneless, skinless | " | Chicken, any skinless, boneless style |
| Turkey, ground | " | Tofu, any style[3] |
| Pork, ground | Beef, pork, veal, lamb, and game | Beef, ground, lean[2]; tofu, any style |
| Turkey ham | Bacon, sausages, and luncheon meats | Tofu, any style |
| Meat and meat alternates, frozen or canned | Meat/meat alternates | |
| Fish, flounder or cod, frozen | Fish and fish products | Sole, whiting, catfish, bass, perch, croaker, walleye, grouper, haddock, pollock, monkfish, rockfish, snapper |
| Tuna fish, chunk style, water packed, canned | " | |
| Beans, garbanzo, chickpeas, canned | Dry beans, lentils, peas, and nuts | Black beans, red beans, navy beans, canned |
| Beans, kidney, canned | " | Black beans; red beans, canned |
| Beans, baked, vegetarian, canned | " | Baked beans with pork, canned |
| **Fats and oils** | Other foods | |
| Margarine, stick style | Table fats, oils, and salad dressings | |
| Shortening, vegetable | " | |
| Salad dressing, mayonnaise type | " | Regular mayonnaise |
| Vegetable oil, any type | " | |
| **Sugars and sweets** | Other foods | |
| Sugar, brown (dark or light) | | |
| Sugar, powdered | Sugars, sweets, and candies | |

| | **Box C-2** **List of Food Items and Possible Substitutions for Food Store Survey Instrument** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Survey Food Item** | **Thrifty Food Plan Food Group** | **Suggested Substitute(s)** |
| Sugar, white, granulated | " | |
| Jelly, grape | " | Jelly or jam, any flavor |
| Molasses, any type | " | |
| Pancake syrup, any type | " | |
| Chocolate chips, semi-sweet | " | |
| Fruit drink, refrigerated, any flavor | Fruit drinks, soft drinks, and ades | |
| Fudgesicles, ice milk | " | Sherbet, any flavor; any other lowfat frozen dessert |
| **Spices and condiments** | Other foods | |
| Baking powder | Gravies, sauces, condiments, spices, and salt | |
| Baking soda | " | |
| Chili powder | " | |
| Cinnamon | " | |
| Cumin | " | |
| Onion powder | " | |
| Garlic powder | " | |
| Italian herb seasoning | " | Any herb seasoning |
| Oregano | " | |
| Paprika | " | |
| Black pepper, ground | " | |
| Salt, any type | " | |
| Vanilla, any type | " | |
| Chicken bouillon, reduced sodium, cubes | " | Beef bouillon, reduced sodium, cubes; vegetable bouillon, reduced sodium, cubes |
| Catsup, any type | " | Salsa |
| Soy sauce, reduced sodium | " | |
| Lemon juice, bottled | " | Lime juice, bottled |
| Gelatin, powdered, unflavored | " | |
| Chocolate drink mix, powdered | " | |

[1]Do not substitute iceberg lettuce, which is considerably less nutrient dense than looseleaf lettuce or the suggested substitutes.
[2]Do not substitute regular ground beef because it has 35 percent more fat than lean ground beef.
[3]Do not substitute lean or extra lean ground beef because they are more than twice as high in fat as ground turkey or tofu.

**Food Pricing**

When selecting and pricing items contained on the store shelves, always select the least expensive food item in the package size listed. To ensure that the item you're selecting is the least expensive, we recommend that you do the following:

- If an item is on sale, check to see if the sale price is the cheapest or if there is another item that is cheaper. Choose the least expensive item. If you choose the sale item, record an "S" beside the price.
- Always make sure that you look at generic or store brands in selecting the least expensive food item.
- If you come to a bulk food section, make sure you check the bulk per pound or per unit price to packaged foods found in other aisles, and select the least expensive.
- If unit pricing is available, always use the unit price code to select the cheapest food item in the appropriate package size.
- Record the price of the item based on the survey question. For example, if you are asked to record the price of a pound of green peppers and the store sells them by the piece, you will have to calculate how many green peppers are in a pound and then convert the "piece price" to that of a pound.

**Closing Procedures**

After the data have been collected, make sure that all food items for which you are responsible have been accounted for. In other words, check to ensure that all items are completed on the survey form. Checking off food items as you go along is a good way to make sure that you don't miss anything. Thank the manager for allowing you to survey the store, and make sure that you have the store manager's name so that a letter of thanks can be sent to the manager after you have returned to your office.

## C.4.  Instructions for Data Analysis

**Analysis of Availability**

The first step in analyzing the availability of the toolkit market basket in your community is to code the data in a systematic format. Use a spreadsheet or columnar paper with the columns designating each store surveyed and the rows for food items. Under a given store's column, record the price for each item observed. If an item was missing in the store mark an "x" in the appropriate row. If you surveyed more than one store, type, e.g., supermarkets, convenience stores, etc. divide your completed food store surveys into store, type. Conduct a separate analysis of food availability for each store type.

**1.   What is the total number of missing items?**

Assume that you visited five supermarkets in your community. To calculate the total number of items missing from each store, count the number of "x's" in that store's column. Let's assume that the total number of missing items for the stores surveyed is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Store 1:** | **11** |
| **Store 2:** | **15** |
| **Store 3:** | **13** |
| **Store 4:** | **14** |
| **Store 5:** | **10** |

### 2.   What is the average number of missing items?

To calculate the average number of missing items across all five stores, add the number of missing items for all stores and divide by the total number of stores surveyed:

$$(11 + 15 + 13 + 14 + 10) \div 5 = 12.6$$

The average number of missing items across all 5 stores is 12.6 (the total number of missing items in each store divided by the total number of stores).

### 3.   What is the percentage of items missing in each store?

To calculate the percentage of items missing in each store, divide the number of missing items per store by the total number of items on the survey (87) and multiply by 100. For example to calculate the percent of items missing in Store 1, divide 87 (the total number of items on the survey) by 11 (the total number of items missing in store 1):

$$(11/87) \text{ X } 100 = 12.6\%$$

**Store 1: 12.6%**
**Store 2: 17.2%**
**Store 3: 14.9%**
**Store 4: 16.1%**
**Store 5: 11.5%**

To find the average percentage of missing items across all stores, add the percentages for stores 1 through 5 and divide by the total number of stores:

$$(12.6 + 17.2 + 14.9 + 16.1 + 11.5) \div 5 = 14.5\%$$

### 4.   How many stores are missing individual food items?

Calculating the individual food items most frequently missing across all stores will tell you whether the availability of particular food items may be limited in your community. Assume that the most frequently missing items were mandarin oranges and bread crumbs (missing in four of the five stores). Fresh melon, lean ground beef, ground turkey, vegetarian baked beans, fudgesicles, and chicken bouillon cubes were the next most frequently missing items (missing in three of the five stores surveyed).

### 5.   What is the percentage of missing items in each food category?

Another variable of interest is the number of missing items in individual food categories (fresh fruits, meats and meat alternates, etc). To calculate the percentage of missing items in each food

category, first calculate the percentage of missing items in each food category for each store. For example, to find the number of missing items in the fresh fruit category in store 1, add the number of "x's" in the fresh fruits column for store 1. In this case, store 1 was missing only apples, so the total number of "x" is 1. To find the percentage of missing items in the fresh fruits category in store 1, divide the number of missing items by the total number of items surveyed (five in the case of fresh fruits). The percentage of missing fresh fruit items in store 1 is 20 percent:

$$\textbf{(1/5) X 100 = 20\%}$$

Continue for the other stores. When you have calculated the percentage of missing items in the fresh fruits category for each store, average them as described below to find the percentage of missing items in the fresh fruits category across all stores:

**Store 1: 20%**

**Store 2: 20%**

**Store 3: 40%**

**Store 4: 40%**

**Store 5: 0%**

The percentage of missing items in the fresh fruits category is the sum of the percentage of missing items in each store divided by the total number of stores, or 24 percent:

$$\textbf{(20 + 20 + 40 + 40 + 0)} \div \textbf{5 = 24\%}$$

**6. How do I make comparisons about missing items across food categories?**

Comparing the percentage of missing items from the fresh fruits category with the percentage missing from other food categories will help you to know whether the availability of whole categories of food may be a problem in your community. For example, let's assume that the percentage of missing items in each food category is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Fresh fruits | 24% |
| Fresh vegetables | 7% |
| Canned fruit | 50% |
| Canned vegetables | 0% |
| Frozen fruits and vegetables | 16% |
| Breads, cereals, and other grain products, fresh | 10% |
| Breads, cereals, and other grain products, dry | 18% |
| Dairy products | 7% |
| Meat and meat alternates, fresh | 26% |
| Meat and meat alternates, frozen and canned | 28% |

| | |
|---|---|
| Fats and oils | 10% |
| Sugars and sweets | 13% |
| Condiments and spices | 9% |

The following categories were missing the largest share of items:

| | |
|---|---|
| Meat and meat alternates, frozen and canned | 28% |
| Meat and meat alternates, fresh | 26% |
| Fresh fruits | 24% |

You also may want to come up with your own food categories for analysis. Some suggestions include total fruits and vegetables; total fruits; total vegetables; lean meats, poultry, and fish; dark green leafy vegetables; and whole grains.

To make these new food categories, add together the following:

***Total fruits and vegetables:***

Fresh fruits +
Fresh vegetables +
Canned fruit +
Canned vegetables +
Frozen fruits and vegetables

***Total fruits:***

Fresh fruits +
Canned fruits +
Orange juice (frozen)

***Total vegetables:***

Fresh vegetables +
Canned vegetables +
Broccoli (frozen) +
Green beans (frozen) +
French fries (frozen)

***Lean meats, poultry, and fish:***

Ground beef, lean (meat and meat alternates, fresh) +
Chicken, fryer (meat and meat alternates, fresh) +
Turkey, ground (meat and meat alternates, fresh) +
Chicken thighs (meat and meat alternates, fresh) +
Pork, ground (meat and meat alternates, fresh) +
Turkey ham (meat and meat alternates, fresh) +
Fish, flounder or cod, frozen (meat and meat alternates, frozen and canned)

***Dark green leafy vegetables:***

Leaf lettuce (fresh vegetables) + Broccoli (frozen fruits and vegetables

*Whole grains:*

> Whole wheat bread (bread, cereals, and other grain products, fresh) +
> Toasted oats (bread, cereals, and other grain products, dry) +
> Popcorn, microwave (bread, cereals, and other grain products, dry)

**Analysis of Food Prices**

The first step in analyzing the cost of the toolkit market basket in your community is to record the prices of individual food items from all store surveys.

If you surveyed more than one store type (e.g. supermarkets, convenience stores, etc.), group your completed food store surveys into store type. Conduct a separate analysis of food costs for each store type.

For each store visited, the price of each item can be found in the appropriate row of your spreadsheet or columnar table. In the example provided, apples cost the following per pound in each store surveyed:

<div align="center">

**Store 1:  $1.29**
**Store 2:  $0.99**
**Store 3:  $0.99**
**Store 4:  $0.99**
**Store 5:  $0.89**

</div>

**1.  What is the average price of individual food items across all stores?**

The average price per pound for apples across all stores is the sum of the prices in all five stores divided by the total number of stores, or $1.03.

$$(\$1.29 + 0.99 + 0.99 + 0.99 + 0.89) \div 5 = \$1.03$$

**2.  What is the average price per unit of each food category across all stores?**

The average price for each food category in each store is the sum of all of the prices of the individual food items in each store divided by the total number of items in that food category.

In our example, the average price per pound for the fresh fruits category for store 1 is the sum of the prices for apples, bananas, grapes, melons, and oranges.

$$(\$1.29 + \$0.59 + \$1.99 + \$0.59 + \$1.50) \div 5 = \$1.19$$

### 3.  How does the average price for an individual food item differs across stores?

Now that you have calculated an average per unit price for an individual food item and food category, you can determine how prices for those items differ across stores in different parts of your community. This can be done by calculating the percentage difference between prices in different stores.

For example, to calculate the percentage difference in apple prices per pound between store 1 and store 2, calculate the difference between the two numbers, divide the difference by the price for store 1, and multiply by 100:

$$(\$0.99 – 1.29) ÷ \$1.29 \text{ X } 100 = –23\%$$

In other words, the price per pound of apples in store 2 is 23 percent lower than the price of apples in store 1.

To calculate the difference between the price of apples in each of the five stores and the average price of apples across all stores, subtract the average price from the price of apples in each store then divide by the average price and multiply by 100. For example, when you compare the price of apples in store 1 with the average price of apples across all five stores, you discover that the price of apples in store 1 is 25 percent higher than the average price for apples across all stores:

$$(\$1.29 – \$1.03) ÷ \$1.03 \text{ X } 100 = 25\%$$

The price of apples in store 1 is 25 percent higher than the average price of apples across all stores.

### 4.  How does the average price for an entire food category differs across stores?

Use the same procedure to calculate differences in prices across food categories. For example, to calculate the percentage difference in the average price of fresh fruits between store 1 and store 2, calculate the difference between the two numbers, divide the difference by the price for store 1, and multiply by 100:

$$(\$1.03 – \$1.00) ÷ \$1.03 \text{ X } 100 = 3\%$$

The price of fresh fruits in store 1 is 3 percent higher than the price of fresh fruits in store 2.

**Calculating the TFP cost of the Toolkit Market Basket**

Comparing the per unit price of food items or food categories across stores provides you with useful information about the cost of purchasing a market basket of foods in different parts of your community and in different store types. However, to determine whether such prices are affordable to low-income households it is necessary to compare costs in individual stores with a national benchmark appropriate for low-income households. In this section, you will learn how to compare the cost of the toolkit market basket with a national reference price for USDA's Thrifty Food Plan (TFP).

Multiply the prices for individual food items by the amount of that food used in the preparation of the Thrifty Food Plan week 2 food list (Box C-2). For example, the TFP food list calls for the following amounts of fresh fruits:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Apples** | **1 lb 4 oz** |
| **Bananas** | **2 lb 2 oz** |
| **Grapes** | **1 lb 8 oz** |
| **Melon** | **1 lb** |
| **Oranges** | **4 lb 12 oz** |

The TFP cost of purchasing apples at store 1 is the price per pound of the apples multiplied by the total number of apples on the TFP food list:

$$\$1.29 \text{ X } 1.250 = \$1.61$$

See box C-4 for instructions on converting pounds and ounces into a decimal point measure.

$$\textbf{1 lb 4 oz} = (16 \text{ oz} + 4 \text{ oz}) \div 16 \text{ oz} = 20 \text{ oz} \div 16 \text{ oz} = 1.25 \text{ lbs}$$

To calculate the TFP cost of purchasing the entire fresh fruit category in store 1 add together the purchase cost for each item:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Apples** | **$1.61** | **(.59 x 2.750)** |
| **Bananas** | **$1.62** | |
| **Grapes** | **$2.98** | **(1.99 x 1.500)** |
| **Melons** | **$0.59** | **(.59 x 1.000)** |
| **Oranges** | **$7.12** | **(1.50 x 4.750)** |

**Total fresh fruit (TFP cost): $13.94**

**($1.61 + $1.62 + $2.98 + $0.59 + $7.12)**

Make the same calculations for the rest of the foods on the survey, and add them to get the total cost of the TFP market basket in each store. A list of all of the food quantities used in the TFP menu is provided in box C-3.

To calculate TFP costs for processed products (e.g., a 29-ounce can of peaches), it is first necessary to divide the recorded price by the package size to get a per unit price. For example, the TFP cost of canned peaches is the recorded price of a 29-ounce can divided by the package size (29) multiplied by the number of ounces called for on the TFP food list (26 ).

$$(\$1.79 \div 29) \text{ X } 26 = \$1.60$$

**Box C-3**
**Thrifty Food Plan Food List**

**Fruits and Vegetables**
**Fresh**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Apples | (5 small) 1 lb 4 oz |
| Bananas | (11 medium) 2 lb 12 oz |
| Grapes | 1 lb 8 oz |
| Melon | 1 lb |
| Oranges | (22 small) 4 lb 12 oz |
| Carrots | 1 lb |
| Celery | 5 oz |
| Green pepper | 4 oz |
| Lettuce, leaf | 9 oz |
| Onions | 1 lb 4 oz |
| Potatoes | 10 lb 8 oz |
| Tomatoes | 6 oz |

**Canned**

| | |
|---|---|
| Oranges, mandarin | 13 oz |
| Peaches, light syrup | 1 lb 10 oz |
| Mushrooms | 4 oz |
| Spaghetti sauce | 26 oz |
| Tomato sauce | 8 oz |

**Frozen**

| | |
|---|---|
| Orange juice, concentrate | (7) 12-oz cans |
| Broccoli | 6 oz |
| French fries | 11 oz |
| Green beans | 1 lb 7 oz |
| Green peas | 15 oz |

**Breads, Cereals, and Other Grain Products**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bagels, plain, enriched | (4) 8 oz |
| Bread crumbs | 3 oz |
| Bread, French | 4 oz |
| Bread, white, enriched | 2 lb |
| Bread, whole wheat | 1 lb |
| Hamburger buns | 8 |
| Dinner rolls | 4 |
| Corn flakes | 1 oz |
| Toasted oats | 10 oz |
| Flour, white | 1 lb 7 oz |
| Macaroni | 1 lb 5 oz |
| Noodles, yolk-free | 1 lb 2 oz |
| Popcorn, microwave | 3 oz |
| Rice, white | 3 lb 2 oz |
| Spaghetti | 11 oz |

**Milk and cheese**

| | |
|---|---|
| Evaporated milk | 4 oz |
| Milk, 1% | 9 qt |
| Milk, whole | 4 qt |
| Cheese, cheddar | 2 oz |
| Cheese, cottage | 7 oz |
| Cheese, mozzarella | 1 oz |

**Meat and Meat Alternates**

| | |
|---|---|
| Beef, ground, lean | 3 lb 15 oz |
| Chicken, fryer | 1 lb 13 oz |
| Chicken thighs | 2 lb 12 oz |
| Fish, frozen | 2 lb |
| Tuna fish, canned | 12 oz |
| Pork, ground | 1 lb 7 oz |
| Turkey, ground | 1 lb |
| Turkey ham | 11 oz |
| Beans, kidney | 15 oz |
| Beans, vegetarian, baked | 1lb 9 oz |
| Eggs, large | 17 |

**Fats and Oils**

| | |
|---|---|
| Margarine, stick | 15 oz |
| Shortening | 4 oz |
| Salad dressing, mayo | 6 fl oz |
| Vegetable oil | 9 fl oz |

**Sugars and Sweets**

| | |
|---|---|
| Sugar, brown | 1 oz |
| Sugar, powdered | 3 oz |
| Sugar, granulated | 9 oz |
| Jelly | 8 oz |
| Molasses | 1 fl oz |
| Pancake syrup | oz |
| Chocolate chips | 2 oz |
| Fruit drink | 1 gal |
| Fudgesicles | 4 |

**Condiments and Spices**

| | |
|---|---|
| Baking powder | .02 oz |
| Baking soda | .18 oz |
| Black pepper | .16 oz |
| Catsup | 1.06 oz |
| Chicken bouillon | .71 oz |
| Chili powder | .79 oz |
| Cinnamon | .08 oz |
| Chocolate drink powder | 1.52 oz |
| Cumin | .05 oz |
| Onion powder | .22 oz |
| Garlic powder | .40 oz |
| Gelatin, unflavored | 2.25 oz |
| Italian herb seasoning | .03 oz |
| Lemon juice, bottled | .54 oz |
| Oregano | .18 oz |
| Paprika | .11 oz |
| Salt | .13 oz |
| Soy sauce | 2.26 oz |
| Vanilla | .52 oz |

**Box C-4**
**Converting Units of Measure**

It is important to note that ounces must often be expressed in terms of fractions of a pound. There are 16 ounces in a pound; therefore, each ounce can be converted into a fraction of a pound.

**To convert ounces into pounds, divide by 16:**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 oz = .063 or (1/16) lb | 9 oz = .563 lb |
| 2 oz = .125 lb | 10 oz = .625 lb |
| 3 oz = .188 lb | 11 oz = .688 lb |
| 4 oz = .250 lb | 12 oz = .750 lb |
| 5 oz = .313 lb | 13 oz = .813 lb |
| 6 oz = .375 lb | 14 oz = .875 lb |
| 7 oz = .438 lb | 15 oz = .938 lb |
| 8 oz = .500 lb | 16 oz = 1.00 lb |

**To convert quarts to gallons, divide by 4:**

1 qt = .25 gal (1/4)
2 qt = .50 gal
3 qt =.75 gal
4 qt = 1.0 gal

1. **How does the cost of the toolkit market basket compare with the Thrifty Food Plan reference price?**

Compare the total Toolkit market basket cost with the appropriate TFP reference cost. TFP reference costs are updated monthly by USDA and are available on the Internet at http://www.usda.gov/cnpp/using3.htm. Choose the reference cost appropriate for the month that you collected your data. For example, if we collected our data in October 2000, we would use the TFP reference cost for that month, or $101.50. The appropriate reference cost is based on a family of four (couple aged 20 to 50 and two children aged 6 to 8 and 9 to 11.

To calculate the percentage difference between the cost of the TFP market basket in store 1 and the TFP reference price, find the difference between the two numbers, divide by the TFP reference price, and multiply by 100:

**($117.91 – $101.50) ÷ $101.50 X 100 = 17%**


The cost of the TFP market basket in store 1 is 17 percent higher than the TFP reference cost, implying that the store's prices may not be affordable to low-income households.


2. **How does the gap between the market basket price and the TFP allotment differs across stores?**

To calculate the percentage difference in the TFP cost for the toolkit market basket in store 1 and store 2, calculate the difference between the two numbers, divide the difference by the price for store 1, and multiply by 100.

3. **What is the average TFP cost for an individual food item across all stores?**

To calculate the average TFP cost of an individual food item across all stores, add the TFP cost of that item for all stores and divide by the total number of stores. For example the TFP cost of apples is the following in each store:

> **Store 1: $1.29 X 1.250 = $1.61**
> **Store 2: $0.99 X 1.250 = $1.24**
> **Store 3: $0.99 X 1.250 = $1.24**
> **Store 4: $0.99 X 1.250 = $1.24**
> **Store 5: $0.89 X 1.250 = $1.11**

To find the average cost:

> **($1.61 + $1.24 + $1.24 + $1.24 + $1.11) ÷ 5 = $1.29**

### 4. How does the average price of an individual food item differ across stores?

To determine how the TFP cost for individual food items differs across stores in your community, calculate the percentage difference between TFP cost for apples in different stores.

For example, to calculate the percentage difference in the TFP apple cost between store 1 and store 2, calculate the difference between the two numbers, divide the difference by the price for store 1, and multiply by 100:

**Store 1 (TFP cost for apples): $1.29 X 1.250 = $1.61**

**Store 2 (TFP cost for apples): $0.99 X 1.250 = $1.24**

**($1.61–$1.24) ÷ $1.61 X 100 = 23%**

In other words, the TFP cost of apples in store 1 is 23 percent higher than the TFP cost of apples in store 2.

To calculate the difference between the TFP cost of apples in each of the five stores and the TFP cost of apples across all stores, subtract the average TFP cost from the TFP cost of apples in each store and then divide by the average price and multiply by 100. For example, when you compare the TFP cost of apples in Store 1 with the average TFP cost of apples across all five stores, you discover that the price of apples in Store 1 is 25 percent of the average TFP cost or

**($1.61 – $1.29) ÷ $1.29 X 100 = 25%**

The TFP cost of apples in store 1 is 25 percent higher than the average TFP cost of apples across all stores.

### 5. How does the average price for an entire food category differs across stores?

Use the same procedure to calculate differences in TFP costs across food categories. For example, to calculate the percentage difference in the TFP cost of fresh fruits between store 1 and store 2, calculate the difference between the two numbers, divide the difference by the cost for store 1 and multiply by 100.

### 6. How do I account for prices for missing items?

Because most stores will have at least one missing item, it is necessary to make some assumptions about the prices of items that are missing so that you will have a complete data set with which to calculate the cost of the market basket and make a valid comparison with the TFP allotment.

The best method is to use the average price for the item that you calculated above. For example, since the average price for apples across all stores was $0.80, this would be a valid price to use for those stores that were missing apples.

**Store Name:** _____

**Store Address:** _____
<div align="center">

**(Street)**
</div>

_____
**(City/Neighborhood)**         **(ZIP Code)**

**Store ID#:** _____  **Store Phone#:** _____

**Store Type:** ____Supermarket  ___Convenience   ___Other
        ____ Large grocery  ___Gas/grocery
        ____ Small grocery  ___Ethnic/specialty

**READ THE FOLLOWING TO THE STORE MANAGER BEFORE CONDUCTING THE STORE SURVEY:**

Thank you for allowing me to spend some time in your store collecting information on the availability of selected food items and their prices. The information that we are collecting from a wide variety of stores in the area will help create a profile of food availability and costs in the community. The information will be only used for this purpose and data collected from all stores will be combined. No data will be linked to any specific store.

**TO THE DATA COLLECTOR:**

Please complete the following table by walking through the store and recording the price and weight of the least expensive item for each food listed. The table includes the unit of measure that should be selected for each food. For example, potatoes are measured in pounds, eggs are measured by the dozen. It is important that the prices recorded are for the specific food item in the table with no substitutions. If a food item is unavailable on the day that you visit the store but is usually in stock, check with the manager for the normal price. If a food is never in stock, mark the pricing box with an NA (for Not Available). If a food is on sale, place an "S" next to the price.

| Food Item | Brand/ Variety | Item Weight/ Unit (Desired) | Item Weight/ Unit (Actual) | Price (Lowest Cost) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fruit—fresh** | | | | |
| Apples, any variety (bagged or loose) | | Per lb | | |
| Bananas | | Per lb | | |
| Grapes (green or red) | | Per lb | | |
| Melon (cantaloupe, honeydew, or watermelon) | | Per lb | | |
| Oranges, any variety (bagged or loose) | | Per lb | | |
| **Vegetables—fresh** | | | | |
| Carrots, unpeeled (bagged or loose) | | 1-lb bag | | |
| Celery, bunch | | Per lb | | |
| Green pepper | | Per lb | | |
| Lettuce, leaf (green or red) | | Per lb | | |
| Onions, yellow (bagged or loose) | | Per lb | | |
| Tomatoes (any variety) | | Per lb | | |
| Potatoes, any variety | | 5-lb bag | | |
| **Fruit, canned** | | | | |
| Oranges, mandarin (juice or light syrup) | | 15-oz can | | |
| Peaches, any variety (light syrup) | | 29-oz can | | |
| **Vegetables, canned** | | | | |
| Mushrooms, pieces | | 4-oz can | | |
| Spaghetti sauce, any variety | | 26-oz jar | | |
| Tomato sauce, any variety | | 8-oz can | | |
| **Fruits and Vegetables, frozen** | | | | |
| Orange juice, concentrate | | 12-oz can | | |
| Broccoli, chopped | | 16-oz bag | | |
| Green beans—any variety | | 16-oz bag | | |
| Green peas—any variety | | 16-oz bag | | |
| French fries—any variety | | 32-oz bag | | |

| Food Item | Brand/ Variety | Item Weight/Unit (Desired) | Item Weight/ Unit (Actual) | Price (Lowest Cost) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Breads, Cereals, and Other Grain Products, fresh** | | | | |
| Bread, white, enriched | | 1-lb loaf | | |
| Bread, whole wheat | | 24-oz loaf | | |
| Hamburger buns, enriched | | Package of 8 | | |
| Rolls, dinner, enriched | | Package of 12 | | |
| French or Italian Bread, enriched | | Per 1-lb loaf | | |
| Bagels, plain, enriched | | Package of 6 | | |
| Bread crumbs, plain | | 10-oz can | | |
| **Breads, Cereals, and Other Grain Products, dry** | | | | |
| Ready-to-eat cereal— corn flakes | | 18-oz box | | |
| Ready-to-eat cereal— toasted oats | | 20-oz box | | |
| Flour, white, all-purpose, enriched | | 5-lb bag | | |
| Macaroni, elbow-style, enriched | | 1-lb box | | |
| Noodles, yolk-free, enriched | | 1-lb bag | | |
| Popcorn, microwave, any variety (unpopped) | | 9 oz package | | |
| Rice, white, long-grain, enriched | | 5-lb bag | | |
| Spaghetti, any variety, enriched | | 1-lb box | | |
| **Dairy Products, fresh** | | | | |
| Milk, 1% lowfat | | 1 gal | | |
| Milk, whole | | 1 gal | | |
| Cheese, cheddar, any variety | | Per lb | | |
| Cheese, cottage, any variety | | 16-oz carton | | |
| Cheese, mozzarella, whole | | 16-oz package | | |
| **Dairy Products, canned** | | | | |
| Evaporated milk, any variety | | 12-oz can | | |

| Food Item | Brand/ Variety | Item Weight/ Unit (Desired) | Item Weight/ Unit (Actual) | Price (Lowest Cost) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Meat and Meat Alternates, fresh** | | | | |
| Beef, ground, lean | | Per lb | | |
| Chicken, fryer, cut-up or whole | | Per lb | | |
| Chicken, thighs | | Per lb | | |
| Turkey, ground | | Per lb | | |
| Pork, ground | | Per lb | | |
| Turkey ham (packaged luncheon meat) | | Per lb | | |
| Eggs, grade A, large | | 1 doz | | |
| **Meat and Meat Alternates, frozen and canned** | | | | |
| Fish, flounder or cod, frozen | | Per lb | | |
| Tuna fish, chunk-style, water packed | | 6-oz can | | |
| Beans, garbanzo (chick peas), canned | | 15-oz can | | |
| Beans, kidney, canned | | 15.5-oz can | | |
| Beans, baked, vegetarian | | 16-oz can | | |
| **Fats and Oils** | | | | |
| Margarine, stick | | 1-lb box | | |
| Shortening, vegetable | | 3-lb can | | |
| Salad dressing, mayonnaise-type | | 32-oz jar | | |
| Vegetable oil, any type | | 48-oz bottle | | |
| **Sugars and Sweets** | | | | |
| Sugar, brown (dark or light) | | 1-lb bag or box | | |
| Sugar, powdered | | 1-lb bag | | |
| Sugar, white, granulated | | 5-lb bag | | |
| Jelly, grape | | 32-oz jar | | |
| Molasses, any type | | 12-oz jar | | |
| Pancake syrup, any type | | 24-oz bottle | | |
| Chocolate chips, semi-sweet | | 12-oz package | | |
| Fruit drink, refrigerated, any flavor | | 1 gal | | |
| Fudgesicles, ice milk | | Box of 12 | | |

| Food Item | Brand/ Variety | Item Weight/ Unit (Desired) | Item Weight/ Unit (Actual) | Price (Lowest Cost) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Other Food Items, optional** | | | | |
| Baking powder | | 10-oz can | | |
| Baking soda | | 16-oz box | | |
| Chile powder | | 3.25-oz jar | | |
| Cinnamon | | 3-oz jar | | |
| Cumin | | 2-oz jar | | |
| Onion powder | | 3.5-oz jar | | |
| Garlic powder | | 4.25-oz jar | | |
| Italian herb seasoning | | 2-oz jar | | |
| Oregano | | 0.56-oz jar | | |
| Paprika | | 2.9-oz jar | | |
| Black pepper, ground | | 4-oz jar | | |
| Salt, any type | | 26-oz carton | | |
| Vanilla, any type | | 6-oz jar | | |
| Chicken bouillon, reduced-sodium, cubes | | 3.75-oz jar | | |
| Catsup, any type | | 28-oz bottle | | |
| Soy sauce, reduced-sodium | | 10-oz bottle | | |
| Lemon juice, bottled | | 32-oz bottle | | |
| Gelatin, powdered, unflavored | | Box of 4 envelopes | | |
| Chocolate drink mix, powdered | | 32-oz can | | |