

NRV Food Access Network
Notes from the Bulk purchasing, Bulk pricing and Food Distribution
Community Conversation
05/15/2018, 1-3pm
New River Valley Health and Human Services Building

Attendees: Morris Fleischer, Charlie Herbert, Vern Simpson, Lester Schonberger, Mary Case, Harriet Shaw, Kelli Scott, Maureen Mc Gonagle, Liz Robertson, and Kim Thurlow

Giles County Christian Service Mission

GCCSM has combined pantries with NRCA and tripled the # of food boxes given out this year. 60-70% of the food comes from in-kind donations from Lions, Rotary, Junior Women's club, Stamp out Hunger Postal Food Drive, etc. The rest of the food is purchased through Smith Valley Meats, Grants, and Walmart locally. They strategically undertake food purchases which amount to \$3 to 4K a year. They are members of Feeding America (\$75 cost per year) but do not tend to purchase a lot of food from Feeding America due to lack of convenience and the inconsistency in the availability of food needed, but do follow all FASWVA protocols. They did receive one drop shipment of food from Feeding America but it included many things that weren't useable and they did not have an opportunity to request what was provided. It included things like probiotic vitamins, soda, and green chilies. Many things were thrown away.

The Newport Backpack Program

Most food is purchased from Kroger at the bulk rate. There was some discussion about how there is no longer a bulk rate available. The rest is purchased through trips to Sam's etc. depending on price and what is available. They need individual sizes of food for the backpacks so it is easy for children to prepare food. Children fall into one of two categories, kids fending from themselves because of lack of parental involvement or because the parents are busy working 2-3 jobs to make ends meet. They also provide 2 summer food boxes over the course of the summer and provide larger quantities of food for these. The Giles County Rescue helps in meal delivery.

Free Lunch Friday in Newport

This has been taken on like a ministry where community members bring all the food that is served so there are no costs for food involved at this time.

Blacksburg Interfaith Food Pantry

Have daily local pickups from Food Lion, available through Feeding America SWVA. These pick-ups consist of a lot of carbs (breads), deli, and some vegetables. They send an average of 7-8 boxes of this food to Giles each week. This amounts for 50% of the food distributed. 25% comes from individual donations, 12.5% from churches which have adopted food items to purchase like eggs, meats, milks, etc. The other 12.5% is from food purchased from Food Lion which is mostly canned and amounts to \$100k a year. Sometime food is purchased through Kroger and Produce Partners in Roanoke. The paperwork and the separate storage required by the USDA program are disincentives for trying to make purchases

through this program. Canned greens are popular as well as low salt veggies and beans (except black beans).

Plenty

They primarily purchase through Slaughters and Feeding America sometimes. The consistency of purchases through Slaughters is better. They probably purchase \$8,000 in dry goods throughout the year. 50% of what is given out is fresh veggies which comes from the farm on site, or gleaning on other farms or partner pick up through FASWVA. A major goal moving forward is healthy and are trying to find low sugar tomato sauce and peanut butter but these are hard to find locally.

Radford's Backpack program has a special relationship with Food Lion to receive discounted food purchases, and were actually nominated for an award for their partnership.

VT Campus Kitchen

Students currently already make deliveries each week but deliveries are not based on products available but days of the week to standing organizations. They try to reserve or redirect certain types of food based on what they know different organizations need but this is somewhat haphazard and is learned overtime with the partnership.

Campus Kitchen as part of its partnership with the Area Agency on Aging prepares dry meals and often also has a need to bulk purchase spices like tomato powder.

Glean Team:

They have two gardens planted and also glean from local farms. How to find out who wants gleaned food when and how much is not currently systematic and based on volunteer knowledge of food access organizations. Getting volunteers that can participate on short notice is also difficult.

Group Conversation/Comments:

Feeding America:

- It would be great if there was a way to make orders electronically to Feeding America.
- Organizations could even likely commit to a standing monthly order if they were guaranteed a price and accurate timing of receipt.
- Students could help to support the pick-up of food from Feeding America.
- It would be good to find out what products people would want to order from Feeding America and what Feeding America prices and ability purchase on a timely basis would be. Specifically, it would be good to ask about sizes needed, items and quantity needed, and frequency for both regular items and for items needed at certain times of the year.

Fresh Food:

- Feeding programs currently have more interest in fresh than most pantry or backpack programs, but if fresh were easier to access and affordable there may be more interest in incorporating.
- There is still the problem of people not wanting the healthier options when they are available that needs to be addressed.
- How to pair health options with what folks want and are willing to take?

Bulk Purchasing:

- Most programs don't have the ability to repackage bulk barrels of rice, beans, coffee, etc. because they don't have the storage space for the food, space to repackage, and/or they worry about food safety working with volunteers that may not have the proper training.
- Items identified that are needed and hard to get: products with no added sugar, fresh products that will be used by clients, low salt veggies and beans, fresh food for hot meal kitchens, and spices.

Bulk Pricing:

- Kroger's bulk purchasing program may have ended, which will effect some organizations
- Food Lion offers a bulk rate discount.
- It is currently more convenient to purchase food at local groceries stores and because what is available in FA's warehouse is inconsistent and there is no way to order ahead. An "order system" and "pick up system" is needed through FA. People are likely willing to commit to regular monthly orders if so.
- Database system that could provide an inventory of what is available would be helpful. This applies to Feeding America as well as other organizations that might have excess food to share.

Prices Fork:

- There might be some interesting opportunities for gleaning organizations to rent the kitchen to utilize otherwise wasted food- applesauce, tomato sauce, soups, etc. or to flash freeze.
- The kitchen and local food entrepreneur might even be able to meet the demand for orders not currently readily available like no- sugar apple sauce, peanut butter, and tomato sauce that could be purchased by food access providers.
- It could also be a place to repackage and redistribute bulk or store fresh food.

Transportation:

- Need improved and systematized communication to support food distribution system. Electronic system would work to help improve the logistics of food redistribution.
- The issue of insecure client transportation and the ability to come and pick up food is a problem that needs to be addressed holistically.

Communication:

- Donor directory would be helpful, so those willing to give will have a central place to go to understand most immediate needs.

Conclusions/Next Steps:

- Need to look into what Feeding America can do around consistency and pricing of purchasing items in bulk.
- Need to explore opportunities to create an online exchange database/inventory of donated/gleaned food in the region to support and help streamline distribution. How can we create a database/app?