



**Community Ministry Food Bank
Client Needs Assessment
Executive Summary
October 2010**

Funded in part by
The Denver Foundation



THE DENVER FOUNDATION

Prepared by
Denise Clark, LLC
in partnership with
Community Ministry

Executive Summary

Purpose

The primary purpose of the Community Ministry Food Bank needs assessment process is to gather information to help plan for the future and make strategic decisions regarding professional partnerships and collaborations, culturally sensitive programming and staffing, service delivery, volunteer training and food bank inventory.

The goals of the needs assessment process are to: 1) assess the food bank's products and services including service delivery; 2) better understand the culturally specific needs of clients; and 3) identify ways to improve feeding the hungry.

Partnership

The needs assessment process involved a partnership between Community Ministry Food Bank, The Denver Foundation and Denise Clark, LLC.

Community Served

Community Ministry Food Bank serves neighborhoods in southwest Denver hard hit by poverty and hunger. In four of the neighborhoods, seniors represent more than 20% of the population, a figure that is significantly higher than Denver as a whole that has 18%. In neighborhoods such as Bear Valley and Harvey Park South, one-fourth of the population are 55 years of age or older. Also over 60% of families served by Community Ministry are Latino, 31% are Caucasian and the remaining 8% African American, Asian, American Indian, and others.

Community Ministry was founded with the recognition that families facing multiple challenges can be supported with emergency food, clothing and local community support and return to self-sufficiency.

Initially, Community Ministry served a handful of families. Today, the food bank serves over 6,000 families annually.

Process and Timeline

The needs assessment was designed as a qualitative research study of the food preferences, experiences and needs of current food bank clients. The process was officially launched in October 2009 and completed in September 2010.

The needs assessment process consisted of two main components: focus groups and surveys. Surveys were administered onsite in English and Spanish to 356 current food bank clients. Focus groups were conducted with 22 members of three specific populations: 1) Hispanic mothers of elementary age children; 2) adults under age 55; and 3) seniors over age 55.

Findings

A variety of findings involving customer service, food preference and the self-choice shopping model resulted from the needs assessment process. A few of the highlights include:

1. The majority of clients have positive experiences when visiting the Community Ministry Food Bank.
2. The need for "staple" or basic food items such as eggs, milk, flour, sugar, etc. was a

significant finding in both the surveys and focus groups.

3. Staple foods are more important to client than culturally familiar foods.
4. Survey respondents and focus group participant stated that fresh fruits and vegetables should be provided at the food bank.
5. Survey respondents and focus group participants consistently provided strong commentary on the self-choice shopping model.
6. The self-choice shopping model gives clients more control over their food choices.
7. The “kids corner” is a great solution for parents when shopping.

Recommendations

Several recommendations that impact Community Ministry Food Bank as well as other Colorado food banks are being made based on the needs assessment findings. A few examples include:

- Consistently provide fresh fruits and vegetables and dairy products.
- Maintain a consistent supply of staple foods.
- Increase the number of food bank visits for individuals age 55 and under.
- Implement the self-choice shopping model at all food banks that includes the use of volunteer “shopper helpers.”
- Other Colorado food banks conduct a similar needs assessment process to establish a baseline of food and service delivery preferences in their communities.
- Develop a toolkit based on needs assessment results to help food banks make important changes in service delivery and food bank inventory.