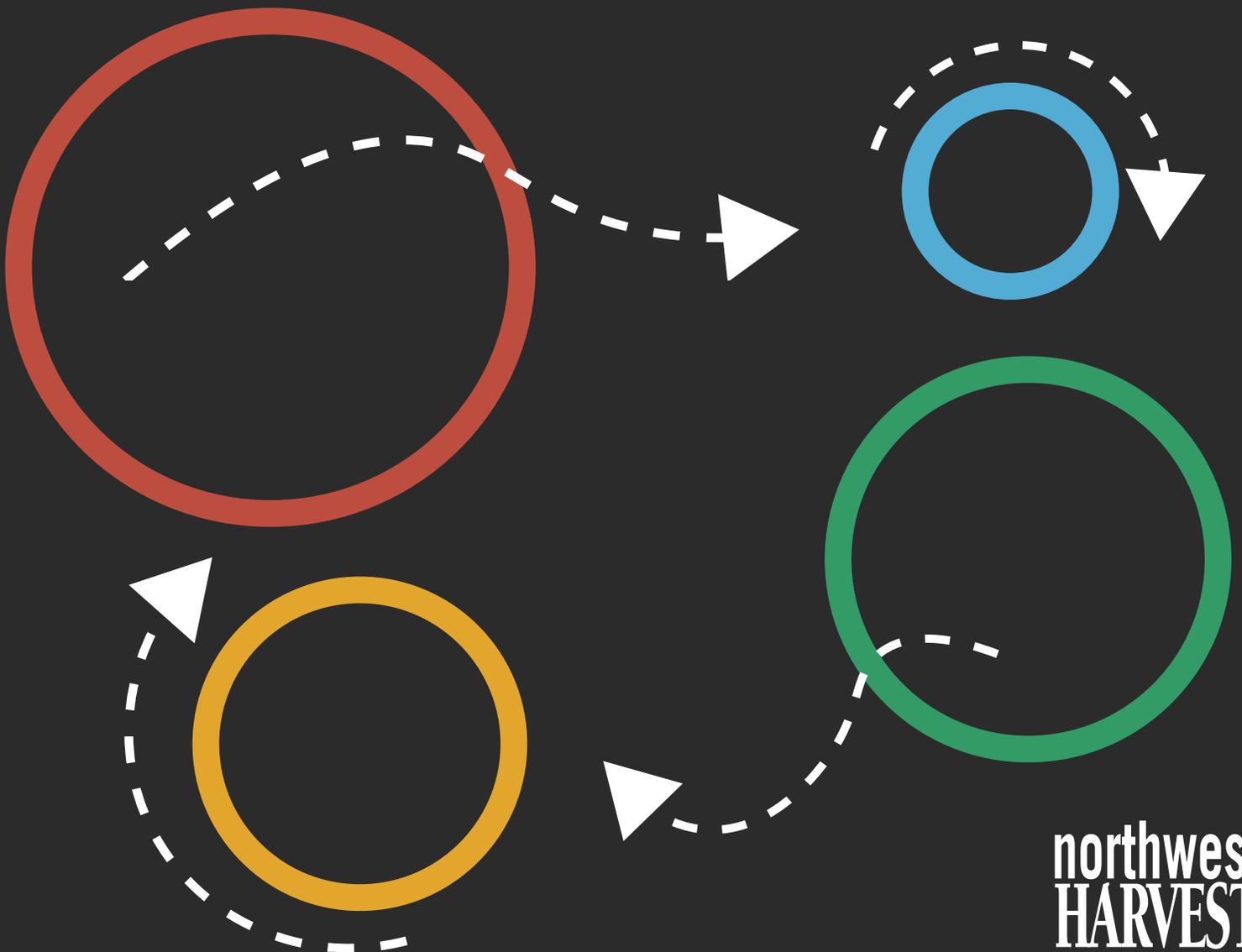


Behavioral Economics Workbook

*Creating Healthy
Food Environments
for Your Shoppers*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all the organizations who contributed their time, resources, and expertise to the Healthy Food Environments Project in King County and to the development of this guide. We also thank the South King County Food Coalition and Seattle Food Committee and their respective member food pantries, whose participation in the Healthy Food Environments project contributed to the shaping of the resources included in this guide.

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Introduction and Wayfinding

This workbook is intended to be a user-friendly compilation of instructions and resources to help food pantries implement simple and effective changes in their environment to support healthy food availability and choice while creating a more respectful experience for shoppers.

This guide is based on a process we developed while working with food pantries in King County, Washington. Our initiative started with a goal of helping food pantries promote healthy food choices. Over time, we developed a process that supported food pantries in making changes to their displays, layout, and processes to promote improved access to healthy foods more broadly. Considering the complexity of food choices and the additional burdens that many food pantry shoppers face, creating a welcoming, low stress food pantry space can allow shoppers a real opportunity to make choices that support their health. Now we want to share this process with others.

Who this guide is for

Staff and volunteers from hunger relief agencies who are interested in prioritizing shopper choice, highlighting healthy food options, and improving overall shopper experience are the primary audience for this guide.

A secondary audience are external agencies that are currently providing, or would like to provide, technical assistance to hunger relief agencies to increase access and reduce barriers.

It is not necessary for your organization to have done any prior work. Even if you have been doing some of the strategies that we will outline here, there is likely room for further improvement and new ways of looking at your space. Regardless of your starting point, you should be able to use the guide for improvement and to continue to think creatively about adaptations.

Food Pantry directors consistently reported to us that the healthy food environment project could support pantries ranging in size and styles of service, but readiness for change is important and a critical first step to move forward with the process. This process centers the shopper by offering strategies to make changes promoting healthy foods but also serves shoppers with dignity and respect. Organizations displaying readiness for change should be in alignment with the project goals and values.

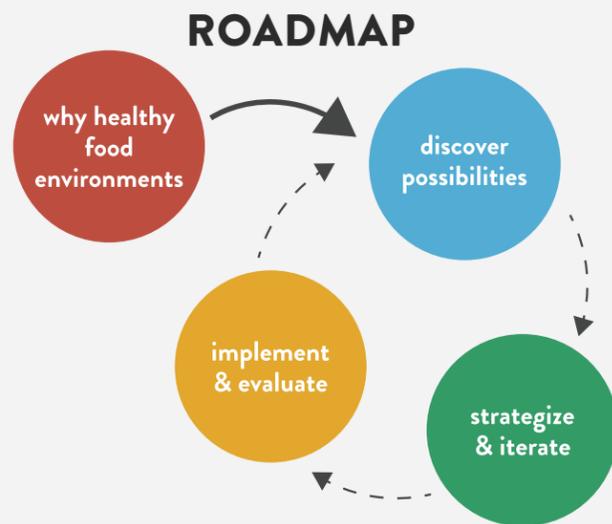
“[Healthy Food Environments] was flexible enough that everybody was kind of able to go and run with what they could run with in their own program.”

This guide uses “food pantry” throughout as the common term when referring to either food banks or pantries. While we only provided this work to one meal program in

our area, we believe that this guide can also be useful for meal programs/soup kitchens.

Process Overview

We believe that centering shoppers’ culturally relevant food needs, preferences, and nutrition are at the heart of creating a healthy food environment. We begin by 1) understanding shoppers’ current experience in the food pantry – including their needs and wants – and identifying where you can better reflect these. Next, we 2) dream and plan what can be by planning, incorporating learnings and available guidance along the way, as well as the strengths of your organization. Then we 3) put plans into action, receive feedback, and continuously improve upon those plans.



The above roadmap highlights the main topic areas for the process that we have found to be effective in assisting food pantries in creating health- and shopper-centered spaces.

The Behavioral Economics Workbook walks through each topic highlighted above beginning with an explanation of why this work is important, then moving to outlining steps that food pantries and technical assistance providers can use to develop plans to improve healthy food access and shopper experience.

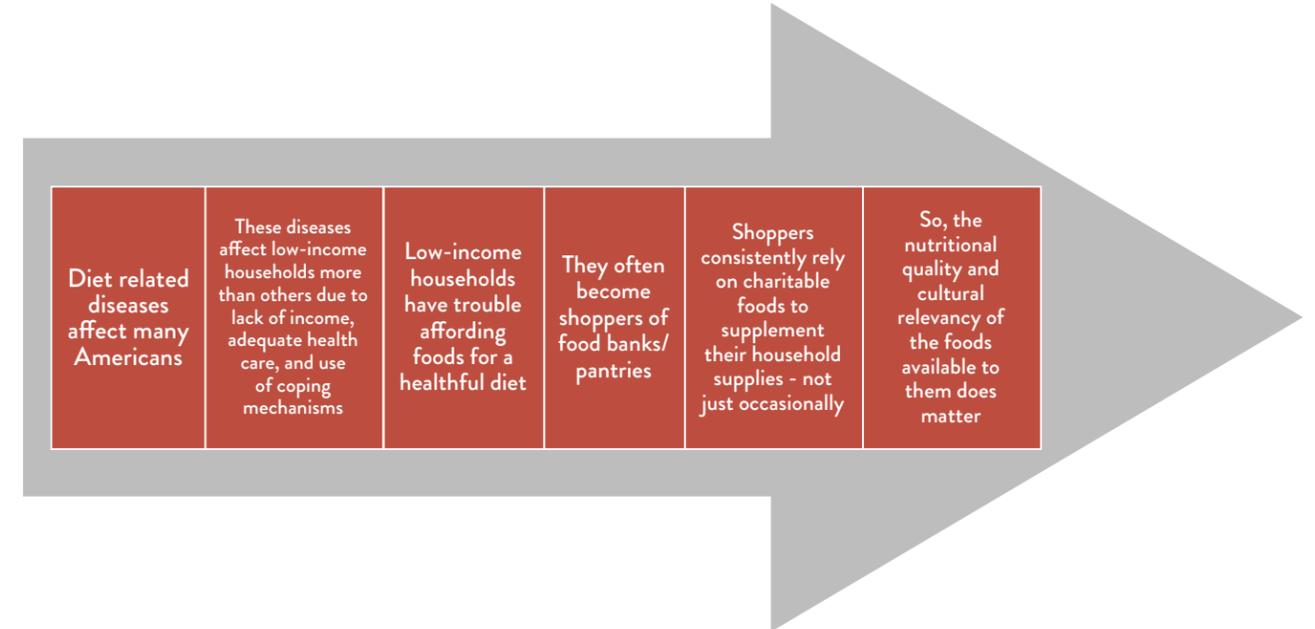
You will also notice at the end of each section, and sometimes after subsections, a page of discussion questions; these are intended to be pausing points for you and your staff, volunteers and even shoppers to reflect and organize. We highly recommend following the steps and questions listed on these pages and taking time for discussion. Lastly, we include additional worksheets and tools in the Appendix.

Why Healthy Food Environments



Consistent food access and availability contribute to increased health and well-being. When individuals have inconsistent access to food because of financial or other constraints, this is considered food insecurity, and it can lead to poor health outcomes as many of us already know. Research has shown that food pantry shoppers often experience a double burden of diet related diseases (e.g. heart disease, hypertension, diabetes) and food insecurity.

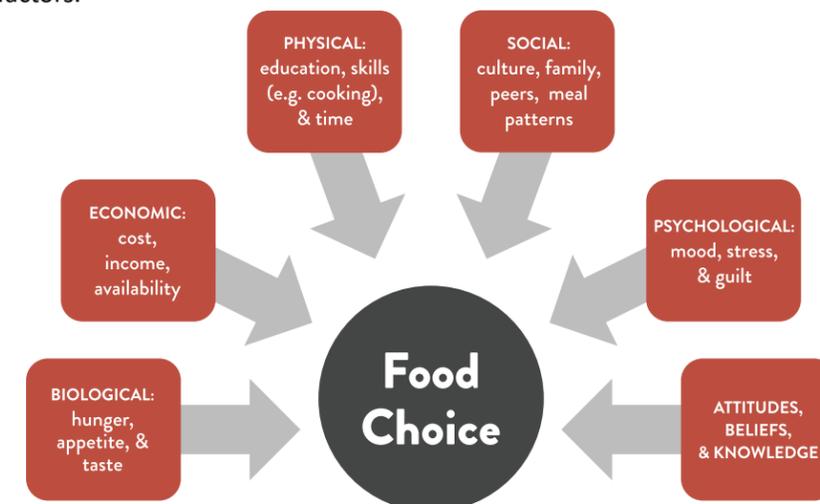
In populations with compounded risk factors (e.g., low income, unhoused, members of historically and/or currently oppressed social and racial groups), which are common among food pantry shoppers, increasing access to healthy and culturally relevant food, particularly fruits and vegetables, can have significant effects on health.



Food Choice

Although we all make choices about the food we eat daily, and sometimes without even a second thought, there are a lot of underlying factors that influence that food choice. This is especially true for shoppers relying on charitable food sources and other food and nutrition programs as a food source. These factors may be internal or in the external environment; we may be consciously aware of them or not, and some generally carry more weight than others. Below is a graphic highlighting these varying environmental factors.

All of these factors can play particularly important roles in the food choices presented to and made by shoppers especially since they are restricted to available free options. Shoppers are also more likely to be experiencing food insecurity, stigma or stress, and time constraints if they have to travel long distances, rely on public transportation, or wait in long lines to access food. Research shows that people make decisions differently when they are under pressures like these. Related to all of this, food pantry shoppers have less freedom to seek out sources of food that are most likely to have options that meet their specific cultural or dietary needs and preferences.



How to create healthy food environments

Many of our healthy food environment strategies draw from Behavioral Economics (BE). This is the study of how our environments influence our choices. Behavioral economics draws from psychology and human behavior and has been increasingly used to modify environmental factors that affect our food choices. Strategies based on behavioral economics principles can help “nudge” shoppers toward healthier food choices by making those choices easier and more appealing while not actually removing any choices.

Food retail and marketing industries function under the same premise and you have probably seen behavioral economics in action. The food retail and marketing industries have grocery item end caps and candy in the checkout lanes. They use behavioral economics to promote the products they intend to sell to consumers.

Below is a list of behavioral economics strategies that can be used to impact the feel of the food pantry environment and to promote healthy foods. Later, we will go into more depth as to what each strategy looks like in real time.

- **Abundance:** The appearance of abundance leads shoppers to take more of an item. The opposite is also true: decreasing the visibility of a food will result in less being taken.
- **Bundling:** Displaying or packaging foods together that can be combined to make all of part of a recipe.
- **Convenience:** Making it easy for shoppers to access food.
- **Normalizing:** Providing a reference to what the “normal,” or average, person does.
- **Placement:** Being intentional about where foods are placed affects how much shoppers take.
- **Priming:** Placing posters, floor arrows, shopping cart placards, etc. that highlight a particular food at strategic locations such as waiting rooms or entry ways increases the likelihood that shoppers will select that food.
- **Signage:** Providing useful information about healthy foods nudges shoppers to choose them over less healthy options.
- **Visibility:** Arranging foods so that they can be easily seen and look attractive.

Use of healthy food environment strategies to change the physical environment can support the mission and vision of any food pantry committed to offering healthy food choices and respectful experiences for their shoppers. These strategies can promote healthy foods without limiting or taking away any actual choices, and often cost relatively little to implement. Food pantries may make relatively minor changes – such as the use of more attractive baskets to display healthy items – or significant changes, such as new layouts that allow for larger displays or multiple placements of healthy food. All of these changes could have positive impacts. Food pantries in King County, WA that used various combinations of the strategies in this toolkit reported the following benefits:

- Shoppers selected more healthy foods, especially fresh produce, when the foods were in attractive, abundant, visible, and convenient displays.
- Shoppers were better able to make their own food choices when foods were displayed in new ways because shoppers could more easily see what is available.
- Food quality improved when shoppers did not have to sift through bins to find what they need (especially in the case of fresh produce).
- Distribution processes felt more efficient and pleasant because improved layouts and displays reduced crowding or slowdowns near some food items.
- Shoppers were more likely to select healthy foods that food pantries regularly had in stock, but which sometimes seemed unpopular (e.g., dry beans) once those foods were promoted.
- Food pantry’s aesthetics generally felt more bright, open, and cheerful when well-organized displays, attractive signages and supplies, and updated lighting were used.

Reflect and Discuss!

We recommend pausing and reviewing the previous information with your coworkers and then finding time to discuss the below questions together. This process is most successful when all parties are on board and ready for change. Use this sheet to jot down your thoughts!

1. What facts and observations are standing out to you after reading this section?

2. What is exciting you and your team?

3. Why do you feel that behavioral economics might be important to your board, staff, volunteers, and shoppers?

4. Which phrase best reflects the readiness of your organization to make changes to your site or process?

- a. We have never talked about making changes/improvements.
- b. Our board/staff have expressed interest in making changes/improvements.
- c. We have already begun work on changes/improvements and would like additional support.
- d. We already use several of the mentioned strategies.

5. What do your answers from above tell you about potential next steps?

- a. Do you need to have additional conversations with board and/or staff? If so, use this guide and the above section as a way to help inform them of the benefits of implementing some strategies.
- b. What key points from this section might you use in communicating with your board or staff?
- c. If you’ve already begun and/or use some of these strategies, how might this guide help you enhance those and/or expand into other strategies?

6. What questions are emerging that you might need to find answers for?

Designing a Health and Shopper-Centered Space

Now that you have discussed why this is important with your team and board, you are ready to commit the time and dive in!

Phase 1: Discovering Possibilities

Shopper Inclusion and Observation of the Environment

This is your learning phase. Be open to collecting all information without judgement. You will assess the data you collect in Phase 2.

There are two main steps here:

Step One: Learn from your shoppers and keep them centered.

Step Two: See your food pantry through an observer's eyes.

Step 1: Keeping Shoppers at the Center

There are many ways to include your shopper's opinions, needs, and feedback in decision-making about the food pantry environment. This is something to think about throughout the entire process, not just at the end. Your food pantry may already have a process for collecting shopper feedback. In that case, you can use existing feedback or you can use one or more of the below suggested methods. Either way, think about ways to ensure you are hearing diverse and underrepresented perspectives.

Consider gathering shopper input through surveys or a customer advisory group to ensure that you are understanding the needs of your specific community (including both current shoppers and individuals and populations who could benefit from a food pantry but do not currently use it). The benefits of surveys are that they will take less time to prepare, require less of a commitment from your shoppers, and allow you to collect input from a broad sample of people your food pantry serves. Customer advisory councils, on the other hand, present an opportunity to discuss concerns and ideas more deeply and involve shoppers in making sense of collected data and planning strategies. All of these ways to collect data can help you understand your shopper's experiences using the food pantry, including which foods are missing but needed, which dietary restrictions and cultural backgrounds are represented, and if shoppers feel respected and understood.

Surveys

Surveys are typically the easiest way to receive feedback from high volumes of people and can be easily tracked. These can be done manually by handing out physical surveys that shoppers complete and drop off in a central location at the food pantry. Alternatively, the food pantry could invest in a laptop or iPad to use on site for survey collection. Surveys offer flexibility in reaching your audience but can lack the ability to collect in-depth responses. We recommend this for quick responses that require little explanation from participants. Make sure to have your surveys available in all the languages, or at least the top three, spoken at your site.

See Appendix: Sample Shopper Surveys page 44 for a sample of a shopper survey

discover
possibilities

Customer Advisory Councils

This is our number one recommendation for ongoing communication and should be created prior to beginning the healthy food environment process if possible to maximize feedback throughout observation, design, and implementation. This option centers the voices of those directly impacted by the physical changes you plan to make and can provide the most helpful solutions to implement. Advisory councils have the added benefit of working with the community members directly and firsthand. While we did not include customer advisory councils in our process directly, some food pantries had their own and included them in their process providing value to the overall process. Below we share an overview of what customer advisory councils are, why they are assessed as being the number one recommendation for ongoing communication, and how to set one up.

A customer advisory council is a group of shoppers that are organized together to discuss a given topic. Consider including your advisory council on decision making processes that impact them as shoppers. For example, you may hold a session to discuss their shopping experience and they might offer what they think should be implemented. This type of organizing promotes a relationship built on trust and respect between food pantry and shopper which is essential to the success of day-to-day operations.

See Appendix: Customer Advisory Councils pages 45-47 for supporting materials such as a sample flyer, guidelines, and overview documents. Please note, these documents were used for the Northwest Harvest's customer advisory council and hold a different name. The framework can be modified to fit the needs of your organization.

Step 2: See your food pantry through an observer's eyes

The purpose of an observation is to ground yourself in the food pantry space to understand the distribution flow and layout and see how shoppers are experiencing the space. Depending on the size of your food pantry, consider having 2-3 observers at one food distribution session to capture what happens in different areas of the space. Having someone like a shopper, new volunteer, intern, or combination of all conduct the observation helps to include varying perspectives. Consider including a staff or volunteer who is able to communicate with non-English speaking customers to offer their input.

A food distribution session is identified as a set number of open hours that people will be observing. Sometimes, for us, this was for the entire duration that the food pantry was open that day and other times it was a set number of hours. Regardless, a distribution session should be longer than 1 hour to get solid information.

On the next two pages is our sample observation day worksheet for you to use when ready.

How to use the Observation Day worksheet:

1. Select one food distribution session and have observers focus on different areas of distribution.
2. Have the observers stand in the background for a while, observing what appears to work well and what is challenging regarding space and flow. Use the worksheet questions to guide your observations of the pantry environment. Write down what you observe without judgment.
3. Strike up short conversations with multiple staff, volunteers, and shoppers in the food pantry about their experiences during the distribution. Engage to learn how they experience the flow of your site. Gather their input and ideas about what is working well and what is not.
4. You can also use this time to energize the staff and volunteers about this project. Tell them a bit about the effort to improve the food pantry environment in a way that will promote healthy choices. Gauge reactions to this prospect and listen to any concerns. Building buy in from those who will help implement changes can make this project run as smoothly as possible.

HEALTHY FOOD ENVIRONMENTS PROJECT

OBSERVATION DAY NOTES

Site: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Number of shoppers today: _____ Typical number of shoppers: _____

Number of staff/volunteers present for distribution: _____ Typical number of staff/volunteers present: _____

Shopper Flow: *Time up to 5 pantry shoppers beginning from when they begin waiting until they are able to enter pantry and begin selecting their food, and then up on exiting the pantry. Select people at different points during the distribution time (e.g., beginning of distribution, mid-distribution, late in the distribution). Note any places along the food distribution space where crowding or slowdowns occurred.*

Shopper	Time Points (e.g. 9:00, 9:15, 9:30)			Notes
	Enter Line	Start Shopping	Exit Pantry	
#1				
#2				
#3				
#4				
#5				

Physical Space: *How is the distribution space laid out? How easy is it for pantry users to carry or move their food selections through the pantry (e.g., able to use or are provided with carts or bags, aisles/pathways are sufficiently wide). You can also consider using this space or a separate sheet of paper to draw how the space is laid out and note areas with crowding or slowdowns.*

Food Displays: How are foods displayed (e.g. on shelves, in crates)? Note where foods are easily seen and reached and where they are less accessible. How and where are nutritious foods (e.g., fresh produce) displayed in particular?

Signage: Are signs in the pantry available in languages that reflect the shopper base? Do signs promote nutritious foods? Culturally relevant items?

Choice & Dignity: How do shoppers and volunteers/staff interact? Do shoppers select their own food or is it handed to them? Do shoppers remove their own items from shelves and place them in their carts or bags (e.g., are not handed items by staff/volunteers)?

User Perspective: What do staff/volunteers/shoppers think about the effort to improve the food pantry environment in a way that will promote healthy choices. What are their ideas about what is working well and what isn't?

Reflect and Discuss!

It's time to pause and reflect on what you're reading and to do a little work. Continue to do this with coworkers. Use this sheet to jot down your thoughts!

discover
possibilities

Discussion questions with your team when thinking about shopper input:

1. How do you currently receive shopper input and feedback?
2. What are some advantages you can think of to have an advisory council?
3. What would you like to learn from shoppers to begin this process?
4. What will be your process for collecting feedback?

Questions to reflect on in regards to your shoppers:

1. What stigmas do food pantry shoppers face? Has your food pantry made attempts to reduce stigma?
2. Are there opportunities for shoppers to contribute their skills and knowledge to the programs? If not, are there ways to make this happen?
3. What message are you sending your shoppers? How can you send a message that you value their health, dignity, and choice?

Once you have held some observation days and talked with shoppers, go through the below questions to begin making meaning out of what you have collected and heard.

1. What have you learned about shopper experience?
2. What have you noticed through observing the flow of your space?
3. Why is this important?
4. What facts and observations are standing out to you?
5. What, if anything yet, is emerging or exciting you?

Designing a Health and Shopper-Centered Space

Phase 2: Strategize and Iterate

The Deep Dive

The deep dive is your ideation stage. This is where you will take all the data and stories collected in Phase 1 and begin considering what actions or changes make sense for your site. Many of the healthy food environment strategies recommended here are based on behavioral economics concepts, which will be described in more detail below. Some additional broader strategies have come from shopper feedback through community engagement work by Northwest Harvest. Once you understand each of the strategies, you can identify where you want to focus based on your learnings.

This would not be a deep dive if there was not a lot in this section. Here's a breakdown:

1. A list of each behavioral economics core strategy with sample photos.
2. A list of broader strategies that could enhance shopper experience.
3. Equipment finding and organizing for strategies requiring additional supplies. A sample equipment purchase catalog template can be found in the appendix on page 51. For a digital version visit www.foodshopperequity.org and the Designing a Health and Shopper-Centered Space page.
4. Deep dive discussion worksheets to lead you and your team through this process. It might help to take a look at these even before getting started and then circle back. You can find these on pages 22-23.

Core Behavioral Economics Strategies

Consider the range of interventions provided on the next pages and which ones might be the easiest to implement, have the biggest impact on shoppers, and make sense for your community, as well as your physical space. Consider pulling together a team of staff, volunteers, and shoppers to review these interventions and brainstorm how they might be used in your food pantry. Many food pantries have found it critical to get buy in from these groups early and often as they will be experiencing and/or tasked with implementing the strategies. Keep an open mind in brainstorming ideas – do not be afraid to push the boundaries of what feels possible!

strategize
& iterate

[DEEP DIVE]

Abundance

The appearance of abundance leads shoppers to take more of an item. The opposite is also true: decreasing the visibility of a food will result in less being taken.

- Create the appearance of abundance with the healthy foods you want to promote.
- Ask shoppers to take what they need and omit limits.



- Present healthy foods in containers that appear to be almost overflowing.
- When a box or crate appears mostly empty, move the food to a smaller container.

- Keep shelves with healthy food choices well stocked.
- Avoid overstocking less nutritious food items.



Bundling

Displaying or packaging foods together that can be combined to make all of part of a recipe.

- Bundle foods and a recipe together.
- Up to 18% more people will choose foods bundled for convenience, even if they are healthy foods.
- Bundling to promote healthy foods can reduce the amount of unhealthy, unbundled foods chosen by up to 25%.



- Make a small display of items that go together for a recipe and include copies of the recipe for shoppers to take.
- Consider culturally relevant bundles that reflect the diversity of your shoppers.

- Simply displaying foods that can be prepared together next to each other can increase how much they are chosen.
- For example: beans with rice, oats with raisins and apples, pasta with tomatoes and onions, or chicken with rice and carrots and chicken broth.



Convenience

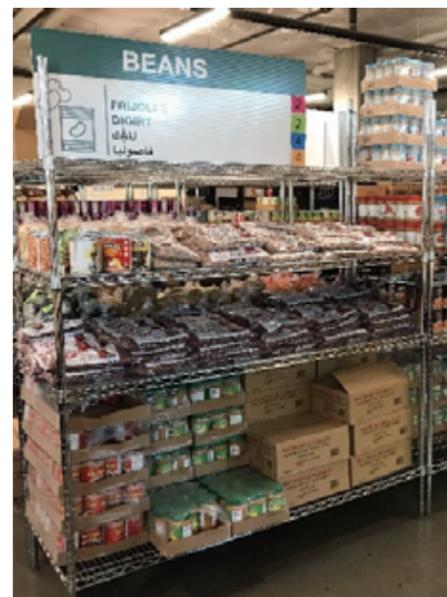
Making it easy for shoppers to find and select food.

Use a shopping model.

- Shoppers can quickly and easily choose the foods they want from organized displays.



Consider expanding or changing distribution hours to serve shoppers who work during typical business hours. Also consider limiting documentation requirements.



Make items easy to see and reach.

- Display items at eye level – not too low and not too high. Lowest shelves could be used for storage or overstock.
- Use shelves for non-perishable foods.
- Angle produce bins so they are easy to see and reach.

Normalizing

Providing a reference to what the “normal,” or average, person does.

- Signs informing shoppers that the average family takes 5 produce items increases the amount of produce taken by more than 10%.

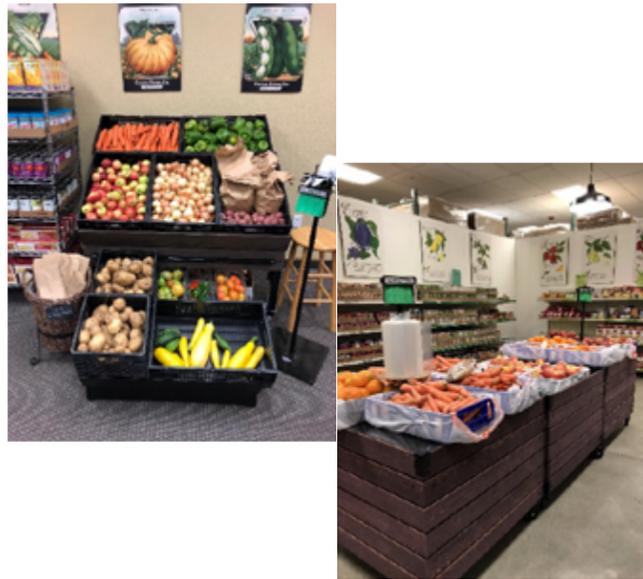


- Use positive messaging on healthy foods, such as a thumbs-up symbol on produce items, to highlight good choices.
- Prioritize translation needs.

Placement

Where foods are placed affects how much shoppers take.

- Placing an item in more than one location on the line can increase takings by 300%. (The first exposure may be priming.)



- Foods placed first in line are chosen up to 11% more than foods later in line.
- Think about produce displays in the supermarket. Place produce displays near the entrance to entice shoppers to choose more.

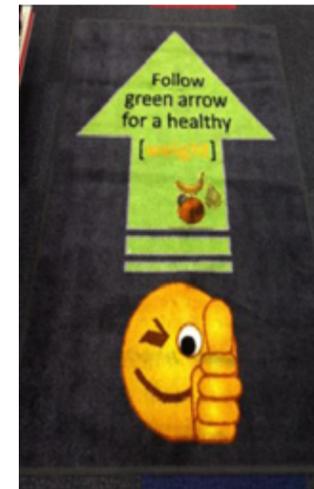
- Foods placed in accessible, easy-to-see locations can be taken as much as 100% more than hard-to-see items.
- Place healthy items at eye level, less healthy items down low.



Priming

Placing posters, floor arrows, shopping cart placards, etc. that highlight a particular food at strategic locations such as waiting rooms or entry ways increases the likelihood that shoppers will select that food.

- Encourage volunteers to “talk up” the produce or other healthy foods that are available that day.
- Floor arrows increased produce sales in a grocery store by 9%.



- Hang posters with beautiful photos of fresh produce that you are distributing that day in the waiting area.
- Free, downloadable photos and images are widely available on the internet.
- Prioritize translation needs.

Signage

Providing useful information about healthy foods nudges shoppers to choose them over less healthy options.

- Display small signs near specific foods with health or cooking tips.
- Hang colorful, informative posters or signs in the distribution area.
- Utilize signage in multiple languages that reflect the diversity of your shoppers.



- Describe foods in exciting, descriptive ways, such as “fresh, locally-grown apples” rather than just “apples.”
- This can increase sales in grocery stores by up to 27%.



Visibility

Arranging foods so that they can be easily seen and look attractive.

- Angle food crates or containers down so the lip does not obscure the shopper's view.
- Use sturdy polypropylene baskets or nice crates to display produce.
- Use bright, cheerful oilcloth tablecloths on produce tables.



- Improve lighting over produce or dairy area.
- In grocery stores, produce that is lighted with soft, focused lighting sells 30% more.

- Display healthy foods at eye level and less healthy foods down below. People tend to take the first option they see.
- Arrange distribution so that foods are not blocked by other foods or tables.
- Consider switching to a grocery store model.



Core Behavioral Economics and Broader Strategies

Below is a tabled list of all the previously reviewed core strategies as well as several broader strategies. Use the previous one-pagers and the below table to record where you are currently applying the strategies and where there are strategies that you want to consider.

	Core Behavioral Economics Strategy	Notes, Ideas, Next Steps
<input type="checkbox"/>	ABUNDANCE: The appearance of abundance leads shoppers to take more of an item. The opposite is also true: decreasing the visibility of a food will result in less being taken.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	BUNDLING: Displaying or packaging foods together that can be combined to make all of part of a recipe.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	CONVENIENCE: Making it easy for shoppers to access food.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	NORMALIZING: Providing a reference to what the “normal,” or average, person does.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	PLACEMENT: Being intentional about where foods are placed affects how much shoppers take.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	PRIMING: Placing posters, floor arrows, shopping cart placards, etc. that highlight a particular food at strategic locations such as waiting rooms or entry ways increases the likelihood that shoppers will select that food.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	SIGNAGE: Providing useful information about healthy foods nudges shoppers to choose them over less healthy options.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	VISIBILITY: Arranging foods so that they can be easily seen and look attractive.	

	Broader Strategy	Notes, Ideas, Next Steps
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Create a nutrition policy with a focus on sourcing culturally relevant foods: Create a nutrition policy focused on how your agency will receive—through donations or purchases—such items. Ideas could include cooperative purchasing models, a food pantry garden or farm, or working with local farmers markets and Black, Indigenous or People of Color (BIPOC) growers. This is also a good way to highlight all the strategies from this guide that you are implementing or plan to implement.</p> <p><i>Sample nutrition policies are in the appendix – Appendix: Sample Nutrition Policies, pages 48-50</i></p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Donor education (e.g., sharing information about the importance of healthy food donations)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Increase access (ties into convenience strategy):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce check-in requirements—especially for new immigrants and refugees who may not have IDs or other requirement forms. • Increase number of times shoppers can visit a food pantry in a month. • Expand food pantry hours. 	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Food demonstrations and taste testing (e.g., offering samples of healthy foods and dishes)</p> <p>For examples visit Cooking Matters: http://cookingmatters.org/educational-tools</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Community Resources Rooms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food assistance referrals (e.g., promoting enrollment in WIC and SNAP, sharing information about nutrition incentive programs) • Provides access to resources such as housing, healthcare, transportation, and other services for shoppers. • Include connecting shoppers to gardens, cooking classes and other expertise in the community. • When seeking out partnerships, prioritize BIPOC-led organizations. 	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dietary accommodations (e.g., offering foods that meet dietary needs based on culture and medical need)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Volunteer training/engagement (e.g., fostering service opportunities and communication styles that respect the dignity of shoppers)	

Equipment Finding and Organizing

Many of these strategies can be put into action without any additional equipment or supplies. For others, some standard equipment and design elements make implementing these strategies easier. For example, slanted shelves allow for better visibility of products while also limiting the need for shoppers to sort through food. The same amount of product displayed using small bins allows for abundance as compared to set out on a table or flat shelf. Clipping a small chalkboard sign on to the side of a milk crate to label the product inside is a quick and easy way for shoppers to know if they are interested in this product, or if they can just pass on by and keep the flow of people moving. We recommend looking at pictures of food displays from other food pantries or grocery stores online to spark display ideas. An easy way to organize your favorite images is to create a Pinterest account (www.pinterest.com). We used this online platform when working with food pantries and it created a great way to collect and sort varying options.

Doing the Work

It's time to put pen to paper to create your plan. Continue to do this with your team. Use this sheet to jot down your thoughts! We highly suggest taking your time here and going through all the below suggested questions and discussions.

strategize
& iterate

[DEEP DIVE]

Step 1: Assess Where You Are

1. Now that you have talked with your board, staff and/or volunteers (from previous section) on why designing a health-promoting and shopper-centered space is important is there an update to their readiness for change?
2. Which phrase best reflects the readiness of your organization to make changes to your site or process? Changes can include anything mentioned above from core to broader strategies. What would you like to learn from shoppers to begin this process?
 - a. Our board/staff have expressed interest in making changes/improvements.
 - b. We have already begun work on changes/improvements and would like additional support.
 - c. We already use several of the mentioned strategies but would like to learn more.
3. What do your answers from above tell you about potential next steps?
 - a. If you're new to implementing any of these, start small if that helps. There's no need to go big from the start. Pick 1 or 2 smaller strategies to dip your feet in and then make plans to slowly expand from there.
 - b. If you've already begun and/or use some of these strategies, how might this guide help you enhance those and/or expand into other strategies?
4. How can you utilize behavioral economics strategies to bridge new external partnerships or how can external partnerships help you utilize behavioral economics strategies?

Doing the Work

Step 2: Plan

1. Budget the time that will be needed to brainstorm ideas, research any additional supplies or equipment needed, and mocking up different possible designs or strategies. This might take a few rounds. Give this the time it needs.
2. Next, identify your actual dollar budget for implementing these strategies– the funds you have available currently. Assess whether you will need additional funds for any of your design ideas. You may know this from the start, or you may have to start a budget and then rework it as you get into designing below.
3. Lastly, identify who would be responsible for overseeing the implementation of your changes/improvements.

Step 3: Design and Iterate

What strategy or strategies do you see as priority to implement? What changes or actions make sense?

Identifying Key Improvement Areas

On the lines below, write in your key improvement areas that were identified through phase one of your work. Then identify which strategy might be useful for solving that challenge.

Now, review the strategies and begin to prioritize which ones would be the most effective for you to pursue based on your observations and data collection. Remember to dream big and keep your shoppers and their needs centered. To guide you in this, use the worksheet called “Healthy Food Environments Strategy Planning” which is designed to be an outline of each of the strategies. For each strategy, there is an area to list what you HAVE already and what you NEED to inquire to implement the prioritized strategy or strategies. Think through what challenges you might anticipate in implementing improvements (such as time, staff capacity, volunteer buy in or support from leadership) and how might you address these challenges. There is no wrong strategy or wrong order. Behavioral economics strategic designs can be flexible and personalized to your space.

Worksheet begins on page 27.

After identifying some ideas for implementation, it’s time to create a list of all the potential tools, resources or equipment. It should include where you will get them from (website or company name), item information, the cost and how many. We have included an equipment purchase catalogue template in the appendix on page 51 that you can use or build from. Make sure to circle back to your original budget.

Doing the Work

Step 3: Healthy Food Environments Strategy Planning

Healthy Food Environment Strategies	Ideas for Implementation <small>(e.g., what do you want to promote or make more accessible with this change)</small>	Potential Challenges to Implementation	Ways to Address Challenges
Convenience			
What resources do I HAVE to implement this?			
What resources do I NEED to implement this? (e.g., shelving, signage, baskets, training, change in layout)			
Normalizing			
What resources do I HAVE to implement this?			
What resources do I NEED to implement this? (e.g., shelving, signage, baskets, training, change in layout)			

Doing the Work

Step 3: Healthy Food Environments Strategy Planning

Healthy Food Environment Strategies	Ideas for Implementation <small>(e.g., what do you want to promote or make more accessible with this change)</small>	Potential Challenges to Implementation	Ways to Address Challenges
Placement			
What resources do I HAVE to implement this?			
What resources do I NEED to implement this?			
Priming			
What resources do I HAVE to implement this?			
What resources do I NEED to implement this? (e.g., shelving, signage, baskets, training, change in layout)			

Doing the Work

Step 3: Healthy Food Environments Strategy Planning

Healthy Food Environment Strategies	Ideas for Implementation <small>(e.g., what do you want to promote or make more accessible with this change)</small>	Potential Challenges to Implementation	Ways to Address Challenges
Signage			
What resources do I HAVE to implement this?			
What resources do I NEED to implement this? (e.g., shelving, signage, baskets, training, change in layout)			
Visibility			
What resources do I HAVE to implement this?			
What resources do I NEED to implement this? (e.g., shelving, signage, baskets, training, change in layout)			

Doing the Work

Step 3: Healthy Food Environments Strategy Planning

Healthy Food Environment Strategies	Ideas for Implementation <small>(e.g., what do you want to promote or make more accessible with this change)</small>	Potential Challenges to Implementation	Ways to Address Challenges
Source culturally relevant foods/ Nutrition Policies			
What resources do I HAVE to implement this?			
What resources do I NEED to implement this?			
Donor education			
What resources do I HAVE to implement this?			
What resources do I NEED to implement this?			

Doing the Work

Step 3: Healthy Food Environments Strategy Planning

Healthy Food Environment Strategies	Ideas for Implementation <small>(e.g., what do you want to promote or make more accessible with this change)</small>	Potential Challenges to Implementation	Ways to Address Challenges
Increase access: Reduce check-in requirements Expand food pantry hours.			
What resources do I HAVE to implement this?			
What resources do I NEED to implement this?			
Food demonstrations and taste testing			
What resources do I HAVE to implement this?			
What resources do I NEED to implement this?			

Doing the Work

Step 3: Healthy Food Environments Strategy Planning

Healthy Food Environment Strategies	Ideas for Implementation <small>(e.g., what do you want to promote or make more accessible with this change)</small>	Potential Challenges to Implementation	Ways to Address Challenges
Community Resources Rooms			
What resources do I HAVE to implement this?			
What resources do I NEED to implement this?			
Volunteer training/engagement			
What resources do I HAVE to implement this?			
What resources do I NEED to implement this?			

Doing the Work

Step 4: Plan for Implementation

Now, let's take this a step further and identify a more detailed plan for your chosen strategies. Use the below worksheet to identify your goals, action steps, and who's responsible for each. This will become your workplan.

Use the table to develop a framework for an implementation plan that answers the who, what, why, and how of each of your priorities. Below is an example.

Example Priority	Action Steps <small>(list out 1-3 next steps to meet priority)</small>	Time Frame	Point Person	Resources Needed	Anticipated Level of Difficulty <small>(easy, moderate, difficult)</small>
Visibility	Identify equipment needs	1 week	Project coordinator, volunteer, or intern	Funds to purchase equipment, time and personnel to receive and setup equipment	Moderate
	Purchase equipment and set them up	2-4 week depending on shipping times			



Priority #1	Action Steps <small>(list out 1-3 next steps to meet priority)</small>	Time Frame	Point Person	Resources Needed	Anticipated Level of Difficulty <small>(easy, moderate, difficult)</small>

Doing the Work

Step 4: Plan for Implementation

Priority #2	Action Steps <small>(list out 1-3 next steps to meet priority)</small>	Time Frame	Point Person	Resources Needed	Anticipated Level of Difficulty <small>(easy, moderate, difficult)</small>

Priority #3	Action Steps <small>(list out 1-3 next steps to meet priority)</small>	Time Frame	Point Person	Resources Needed	Anticipated Level of Difficulty <small>(easy, moderate, difficult)</small>

Congratulations! You've just embarked on a journey beginning with assessing then budgeting and moving right along to dreaming and planning for your key improvement areas. There was a lot of work here so take a moment to honor what you've done.

In the next section, you'll begin implementing your designs and learn about key areas for evaluation.

Designing a Health and Shopper-Centered Space



Phase 3: Strategize and Iterate

Now that you have your identified strategies, equipment, supplies, and budget, you can begin implementing!

First, purchase any necessary equipment and begin implementing changes. In our experience with several food pantries, it generally takes a month or two of rolling out changes and adjusting as needed to get into a new rhythm.

Second, if you haven't already, now is the time to inform your full staff and volunteers of the direction your organization is heading and how they can best support the new changes. This may include trainings on how to display shelving, how to stock foods so healthy options are at eye level, or possible taste testing.

Third, after trying out some changes in your food pantry to promote healthy foods, we recommend collecting some data to assess how implementation of these changes is working and the extent of the changes' impact. Ideally, you will share and discuss your evaluation results with staff, volunteers, and even board members to help you address questions such as:

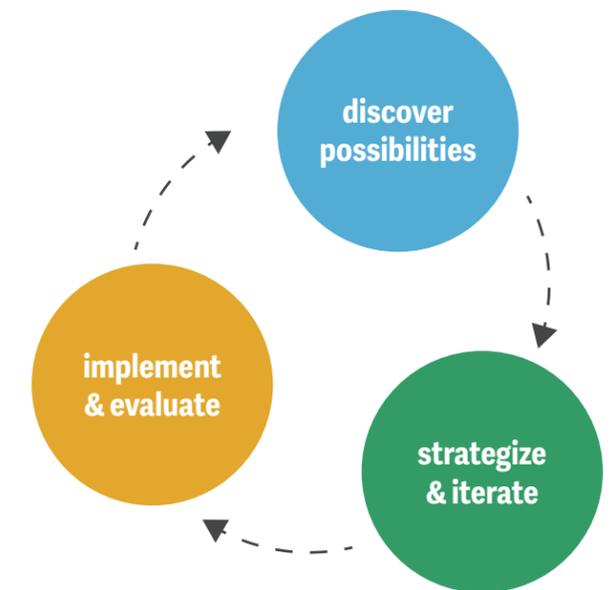
- What is working well right now? What should we do differently?
- To what extent are these changes making the kind of impact we had envisioned?
- How can we build on what is working well to achieve even bigger goals?
- Where do we need more support to make our changes more successful?

You might also share evaluation results with funders who have provided support for your changes so they can understand the impact of their investment.

Rather than thinking about evaluation as something you only do at the end of a project, we encourage you to think about it as an activity to do continuously which is why we first introduced assessments in the first phase of Discovering Possibilities. While we framed that section as learning and observing, the tools to evaluate changes and new processes are the same and include surveys, interviews, and customer advisory councils.

Evaluation is where we end and begin. We evaluate to know the changes we made are successful and also use evaluation to discover new possibilities that then take us through the cycle once again. It is important to note that some change cycles will be easy and quick and then others take more time. If you pause and think about any of the changes you have already made at your site, you can easily see this.

On the next page is table of suggested evaluation questions and methods for data collection. As you plan and conduct your evaluation activities, it is important to keep in mind that not all stakeholders experience your food pantry in the same way. Changes made will impact some shoppers differently than others and might even have negative unintended consequences occasionally (e.g., new signage might be confusing to shoppers who do not speak English, emphasizing fresh produce and other non-processed foods may be unhelpful to shoppers without kitchens). Likewise, some staff or volunteers may be less enthusiastic about some changes over others or less clear about the reasons and guidance for the changes. All of these reasons make it important to be including staff, volunteers, and shoppers throughout the process.



As you design your evaluation plan, think about ways to seek diverse and underrepresented perspectives. Using translated tools or multilingual volunteers to assist with data collection are great ways to do this. You can also collect data at different times of the week and times of the year so that your data reflects volunteer and shopper populations that use the food pantries at different times and foods that are more prevalent at different times of the year. Also, it can be helpful to offer incentives to shoppers that devote extra time to providing feedback (e.g., gift card or other donated food or items); this can make it easier to involve a diverse array of shoppers that truly reflect your shopper base.

Suggested evaluation questions and methods

	Evaluation Questions	Rationale and details	Suggested methods
IMPLEMENTATION	What changes are being made in the food pantry and how consistently are these implemented?	Assessing the use of behavioral economics. Often, changes might be planned but then implemented sporadically or in different ways depending on who is involved. It is important to understand if your plan is being implemented as intended before you are assessing its impact. This information will help you identify which changes might need more focused effort to implement them well.	Perform an observational-based assessment to evaluate: 1) the extent to which shoppers are able to select their own foods; 2) healthy foods are displayed in a prominent, visible, and appealing ways; 3) “nudges” are being used to promote targeted foods (e.g., signage, recipes, bundling); and 4) aspects of the environment are welcoming and respectful (e.g., signs in multiple languages).
	What about implementation is working well and what is challenging? Why?	This information should help you understand why some changes are being implemented regularly or well and others are not. It can also help you understand where staff, volunteers, and shoppers are experiencing challenges related to implementation (e.g., those related to communication, time, training needs, or materials and supplies).	Regular check in questions during meetings with staff/volunteers involved in implementing the changes. Volunteer survey on perceptions of changes in the food pantry and volunteer roles. Sample questions can be found in the Appendix on page 52 within the SAMPLE STAFF/VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.
	How have our changes impacted the food we receive and distribute?	This information focuses on assessing the quality, quantity, and/or diversity of the food your food pantry distributes. You can focus your assessment on details that are most important to your food pantry (e.g., sodium or sugar content, availability of fresh produce). If you collect these data periodically, you will be able to look to your data to see if changes occur over time in line with your goals, and/or compare them to nutrition standards for charitable food or those in your agency’s nutrition policy. HER Charitable Food Guidelines: https://healthyeatingresearch.org/research/healthy-eating-research-nutrition-guidelines-for-the-charitable-food-system/	Inventory assessment “snap shots” documenting the number and types of foods available for distribution along with key nutritional information for these items from the nutrition label.

	Evaluation Questions	Rationale and details	Suggested methods
IMPLEMENTATION	How have our changes impacted our shoppers’ experiences in the food pantry?	This information will help you understand how your changes are experienced by shoppers. You can ask shoppers about the changes directly (e.g., if they noticed them and how they feel about them). Alternatively, you can ask about general aspects of their food pantry experience before and after changes are implemented to see if the changes influence these experiences. Domains you might want to explore include perceptions about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of food choice/options • Food variety, quality/freshness, healthfulness, and the extent to which it meets specific needs and preferences • The process for getting food, including how long it takes, interactions with staff and volunteers, and clarity of signage • Extent to which shoppers feel welcome and respected • Demographics, to help you understand which perspectives are reflected in your data 	Shopper survey on perceptions of foods and changes in the food pantry or receive feedback through a Customer Advisory Group or Focus Group. Sample questions can be found in the Appendix on page 44. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considerations for surveys: • In person surveys may require planning to minimize disruption to distribution flow. • Incentives can boost response rates. • Plan for the cost of translation and how to analyze non-English responses. • Check box questions are fastest to answer and easiest to interpret, but less rich than open-ended questions. • Paper surveys are simplest, but using tablets saves data entry time.
	How have our changes impacted our shoppers’ food selections?	This information will help you understand if shoppers are selecting more of the healthy foods targeted by changes you are making in your food pantry. You can use surveys to do this at a high level or you can recruit a sample of shoppers who let you document their food selections (e.g., using picture taking or note taking and information from food labels). If you do this with a sample of shoppers both before and after changes are made in the food pantry, you can determine if your changes are associated with increased selection of foods in alignment with your goals (e.g., foods have lower sodium on average, a greater proportion of foods are fresh produce items).	Shopper survey on perceptions of foods and changes in the food pantry or receive feedback through a Customer Advisory Group. Cart assessments documenting the amount, types, or nutritional content of foods selected by shoppers. Planning is required to ensure assessments are not disruptive to distribution flow. Incentives can boost response rates.

Recap and Reflect!

Congratulations! You have not only spent time learning from your shoppers, staff and volunteers, but you've also made your site a Healthy Food Environment!

Now that you know what to do, keep a feedback loop going between your staff/volunteers and shoppers. Return to the discovery phase as often as you need when a sticking point emerges. Continue to iterate, trying out new ideas - especially the small ones. Don't forget to enjoy the process and the fruits of your labor!

Let's take a moment to check where you've been and what you might have left. Below is a list of all that's been covered so far. Check off those you've completed. Make notes for where you still have work to do.

Complete Y/N	Topic	Notes
	Learned about behavioral economics and how these changes can impact your space.	
	Engaged your board, staff, volunteers, and shoppers for buy in.	
	Completed an observation of your current setup and functionality of space.	
	Brainstorm possibilities of what behavioral economics strategy(ies) could be implemented.	
	Strategized a plan to implement changes.	
	Incorporate stakeholder feedback, especially shoppers.	
	Implement changes.	
	Have an evaluation plan.	

1. Where have you landed? What is still left to do?

2. What, if any, are your next steps? (What do you have left to complete?)

implement
& evaluate

Healthy Food Environment Narratives

Disclaimer: The highlights featured in this section are reflective of changes that occurred prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. For a full gallery of changes that were made during this project, visit foodshopperequity.org and click on Behavioral Economics Gallery.

White Center

Changes made

Implemented behavioral economics strategies as part of a major remodel and transformation of the food pantry layout that replaced the waiting room with an open shopping area, moved fresh produce indoors from outdoors, and updated flooring, shelving, and coolers. The food pantry changed from a line-based distribution model with all food on shelves behind volunteer assistants to a shopping model with food on shelving and in coolers for self-selection. The food pantry also provided grocery carts to shoppers and instituted a shopper appointment system to eliminate long wait times.

BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS STRATEGIES INCLUDED:

- Improved visibility of fresh produce by placing abundant displays of fresh produce in the center of the shopping area
- Improved convenience of fresh produce through the use of tilting produce tables and offering produce bags to shoppers

Noted challenges and successes

CHALLENGES:

- A fair amount of staff turnover during project
- Large signs and posters didn't seem particularly effective because of the space they required, and people didn't pay attention to them; small shelf labels were preferable

SUCCESSES:

- Additional funding was available for the re-model

Kent

Changes made

Implemented behavioral economics strategies as part of significant transformation of the distribution model and layout. The food pantry replaced their line-based distribution model that organized most foods by type in crates (with some volunteer assistance) to an open format, shopper-directed choice model with food displayed on shelving and tables.

BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS STRATEGIES INCLUDED:

- Improved convenience and visibility of foods by displaying them on shelving; this also improved convenience because shoppers did not need to dig around in bins to find foods they wanted.
- Placed produce on the first table shoppers saw when they walked in the room

“We have done just those little things of like just looking at our current line and saying, “Oh, we have pastries taking up the table’s worth, and we have our produce a table’s worth. Well, if we can drop down that pastries to one box, we gain like a whole ‘nother table for produce.”

“We’ve been doing [things one] way for probably about 10 years. So, kind of having some fresh eyes come in and see some things that we hadn’t like even thought of, or those kinds of things, was really nice.”

Noted challenges & successes

CHALLENGES:

- Had some concerns about how much time shoppers might take in the food pantry with a shopping as opposed to a line distribution model

SUCCESSSES:

- Having someone look at the layout and displays with “fresh eyes” since staff having been working there for a long time

Tukwila

Changes made

Implemented behavioral economics as part of layout change that included bringing the fresh produce and bread distribution areas from outside tents to the indoor distribution area. Also used LEAN management principles and assessments to identify opportunities for improvements in the efficiency of the distribution process.

BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS STRATEGIES INCLUDED:

- Made produce selection more convenient and appealing through well-organized and abundant displays of fresh fruit and vegetables by filling in the base of crates so they always looked full to overflowing
- Replaced coolers with options that included good lighting to improve the visibility of chilled items like milk and yogurt
- Organized bread rack so that whole grain options were placed at eye level
- Used priming by adding pictorial signage on the outside of freezer doors to inform shoppers what types of frozen meat options were contained inside (including halal options)
- Added a lobby for shoppers to improve their overall experience waiting to get their food

Noted challenges and successes

CHALLENGES:

- It took a while to figure out how to reconfigure the space
- There are some challenges associated with offering produce first because it can lead shoppers to pile other food on top of fragile fruits and vegetables

SUCCESSSES:

- Knowledge/orientation to behavioral economics principles
- The new vegetable displays helped to preserve the quality of the produce and made for more preferable volunteer tasks

“We started to be able to see where things were getting clogged up, in terms of the flow, like people flow... We saw that they were spending a lot of time in the bread, searching through... So, we were able to sort the bread by types so that people could see like, oh, this is our whole-grain bread. This is our white, sliced bread, these are our rolls, whatever. And then it just started to go again because then they could just get the loaves that they wanted, and it was done.”

“To have it just crammed in a freezer, which it was before, all just random, because there was no way to sort at all, and you had to literally open the freezer and sort through all the meat to find what you wanted...I mean [now] it looks so nice, and then people already knew they could look at it, and they knew exactly what they wanted. All they had to do was open the door, reach in and get it, and close the door.”

Enumclaw Plateau Outreach

Changes made

Made relatively small changes using new supplies and displays to highlight healthy options within their open-format, mostly shopper-directed choice distribution model. The food pantry also transitioned from pre-bagged fruits and vegetables to self-selected produce.

BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS STRATEGIES INCLUDED:

- Increased the visibility, appeal, and convenience of fresh produce by moving it from a flat table to a tilting produce rack display and offered produce bags
- Displayed posters highlighting fresh produce
- Use “Rinse to Reduce” stickers to encourage lower sodium preparation of canned beans and vegetables

Noted challenges and successes

CHALLENGES:

- Had some concerns about how much time shoppers might take in the food pantry with a shopping as opposed to a line distribution model

SUCCESSSES:

- Having someone look at the layout and displays with “fresh eyes” since staff having been working there for a long time

“I mean, most definitely we’ve had some “Well, why do people need to pick out their own vegetables?” And it’s kind of like, that question back: “Well, when you go to the grocery store, do you get to pick out your own vegetables?” The whole thought is for people to be able to have choice and to have that dignity and have that offering that it’s not that, “Okay, here just walk through the line and you get what you get.” It’s being able to take that time and be able to have that experience to take home to your family is a lot more dignified. So, I’m excited for that.”

Appendix

SAMPLE SHOPPER SURVEYS

CUSTOMER ADVISORY COUNCILS

SAMPLE CUSTOMER COUNCIL FLYER
SAMPLE GUIDELINE DOCUMENT
SAMPLE WORKPLAN

SAMPLE NUTRITION POLICIES

NORTHWEST HARVEST
LIFELONG CHICKEN SOUP BRIGADE
SOUTH KING COUNTY FOOD COALITION

EQUIPMENT PURCHASE CATALOGUE TEMPLATE

EVALUATION TOOL

SAMPLE STAFF/VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



Shopper Survey. Please take 5 minutes to complete. This survey helps us to understand how we are improving our services for you.

1. How often do you visit this food bank? <input type="checkbox"/> 1st time <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times before today <input type="checkbox"/> 3-5 times before today <input type="checkbox"/> 6-20 times before today <input type="checkbox"/> >20 times before today					
Check one box to indicate how you feel about each statement.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
2. I was pleased with the food options.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. I was pleased with the food quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. There were enough options to support my health.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. There were enough options representing my culture and/or religion.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. I could choose my own food.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7. I feel that my needs are understood by the food bank staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8. I feel respected at the food bank.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9. I would feel comfortable coming back.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10. I am satisfied with the amount of time it took to go through the food bank and receive my food.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

CARE ABOUT YOUR FOOD BANK?

JOIN THE PARTICIPANT COUNCIL!

- **WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE TO MAKE THIS FOOD BANK BETTER?**
- **HOW IS OUR SCHEDULE?**
- **WHAT FEATURES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN A NEW FOOD BANK?**
- **HOW CAN WE MAKE POLITICIANS UNDERSTAND WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON OUT HERE?**

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO RUN A BETTER FOOD BANK AND ASSIST IN MAKING IMPORTANT DECISIONS. IF YOU ARE WILLING TO HELP PLEASE CONTACT NORTHWEST HARVEST:

EMAIL: INFO@NORTHWESTHARVEST.ORG
CALL: 800-722-6924



Participant Advisory Council Engagement Guidelines

The Participant Advisory Council (PAC) is an invaluable resource for Northwest Harvest. It does not take much imagination to see how closer relationships and better communication with the people who use our food bank would help to keep us honest and potentially improve what we do at every level. It would also be a logical next step if we wish to remain on the cutting edge of not only fighting hunger but treating people with dignity while we do it. In its current form the PAC can and should be utilized for input and feedback for Northwest Harvest operations and advocacy.

The success of the PAC is dependent on strong relationships between Participant Advisors and NWH Staff and continued opportunities for engagement with the work. This Advisory Council is not a speaker's bureau, though, and shouldn't be utilized solely to recruit people who use our food bank services for speaking engagements. That being said, it is encouraged to continue to provide opportunities for Participant Advisors to build skills, advocate, and make connections. When utilizing the PAC for non-feedback opportunities please keep in mind the following guidelines:

- The PAC meets monthly with varied attendance throughout the year. People often need a lot of advanced notice in order to participate. Please give us as much lead time as you can so we can identify the right person and conduct any necessary prep work. Day of or day before requests are almost definitely not going to give us enough time.
- Advisors often desire prep time to feel confident in telling their story or showing up to an event. Please provide as much information as possible about the opportunity. This can include: questions, uses of the interview, how to access the event, when and how to get the final copy, other attendees, etc.
- Advisors and shoppers deserve payment for their participation as much as possible. It can be hard, humbling, embarrassing, painful, or any other kind of emotion to retell a story relating to hunger or poverty. Recognizing this, please build into any upcoming budgets ways to compensate participants for their time and energy when engaging in these opportunities. This includes transportation costs and child care costs.

Cultivating Participant Voices: Proposed Work Plan

Introduction

As I understand it active participation from shoppers in advocacy has been an ongoing struggle in the Anti-Hunger movement generally and at NWH specifically. It is a persistent challenge to locate participants we would like to speak with lawmakers, donors, or other audiences. We know that their stories are powerful tools to sway hearts and minds, but finding participants willing to share them publicly has been inconsistent at best. Focus Group Reports strike me as an extremely effective response to this reality, but their shortcomings are well known, and I of course have been hired in part to tackle this problem by building more consistent relationships with participants. So, how do we bring more participant voices into conversations we view as important?

I suggest we begin by inviting participants into conversations *they* view as important. I think we all know that the trusting relationships necessary to increase involvement in advocacy cannot be built around one-off requests to speak and visits to our food bank alone. If we are serious about developing a loud and consistent participant voice in our work, then we need to take the long view. We need to develop a group of people that feels excited and empowered—emotions that can be hard to come by when you depend on a food bank for your primary source of food. So, what do we do? We begin by inviting them to have more input right here at Cherry Street. I would like to begin developing a Shopper Council comprised of regular visitors to our food bank. I think the benefits of developing such a group would not just aid our advocacy work, but everyone at NWH. It does not take much imagination to see how closer relationships and better communication with the people who use our food bank would help to keep us honest and potentially improve what we do at every level. It would also be a logical next step if we wish to remain on the cutting edge of not only fighting hunger, but also treating people with dignity while we do it.

How it Works—or doesn't

I know from experience that most people welcome the opportunity to exercise more control over their own lives regardless of being poor or hungry. However, to succeed in the long run this means it is up to us to ensure that that this is in fact what this committee allows them to do. We need to give people a real reason to participate, not just a more time intensive suggestion box. Ultimately, this would mean giving them some sort of real decision making power (some ideas below). This does not need to happen all at once, but it is important to recognize people will not participate for long if they feel it is pointless. Would you? Would I?

Figuring out how to empower such a group in a way that works for both participants and staff will be a long and at times painful process. In fact, I think it would be a major mistake to initially broadcast this intention to anyone involved. Instead I would suggest simply allowing me to do the work and seeing how things develop organically. I mention it now only because I believe it is so vital to our long-term success. A hollow showpiece will not cultivate passionate advocates, but a real committee of engaged participants could. If participants feel more ownership over the food bank they will fight much harder to protect it—and some number of them will be happy to go wherever Christina asks. For the time being, I would ask permission to work towards developing a Shopper Council for input only. I would

Northwest Harvest's Nutrition Policy:

Deconstructing "Nutritious" in "Equitable Access to Nutritious Food for All in Washington"

1 in 9 Washingtonians has limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate food (otherwise known as being food insecure). **The health effects of food insecurity are alarming:**

- Those who experience food insecurity are more likely to have high blood pressure, obesity, depression, and asthma.
- Adults who are food insecure are 50% more likely to develop diabetes than adults who have plenty of nutritious foods available to them.
- The rate of diabetes is related to the amount of food insecurity: The greater the food insecurity, the more likely someone living in that household will have diabetes.
- Both food AND medication are required to properly treat diabetes. Poverty often requires that one is chosen over the other. This means that people with diabetes who live in poverty are often unable to manage their disease well, leading to complications like nerve damage, cardiovascular issues, and eye and kidney problems.

Most of these conditions can be improved by eating nutritious food. Northwest Harvest is in a unique position to offer more healthy choices that positively affect what food insecure Washingtonians eat every day.

"Let food be thy medicine..." – Hippocrates

Based upon the USDA's MyPlate, Northwest Harvest's goal is to distribute:

- A variety of fruits and vegetables, both fresh and canned - The canned items that are purchased will be low in sodium and sugar.
- Whole grains - At least half of the grains that are purchased will be whole.
- Lowfat and nonfat dairy foods - Only unsweetened milk and yogurt with limited added sugar will be purchased.
- A variety of protein foods from both animal and plant sources - Emphasis will be placed on purchasing lean, unprocessed meats.
- Cooking oils containing healthy fats
- Dried herbs and spices
- All canned and shelf stable foods that are purchased will be low in sodium and sugar.
- Donors will be educated on which foods to donate to help improve food bank customers' health.

Northwest Harvest commits to the following guiding principles for the foods that are distributed to partner programs throughout Washington state:

- Align food inventory with our mission to lead the fight for hungry people statewide to have access to nutritious food while respecting their dignity and promoting good health.
- Focus on variety and nutrient density across and within all food groups to help ensure that nutrient needs are met without providing excess "empty" calories that contribute to weight gain.
- Limit the distribution of foods high in added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium since high intakes of these are associated with diet-related health concerns.
- Help food bank participants shift to healthier food and beverage choices by providing education and information on healthy food.
- Take ethnic and cultural preferences into account when purchasing and distributing foods. Provide choices that are not only nutritious but familiar and comforting.



Food and Nutrition Policy – Chicken Soup Brigade

Chicken Soup Brigade (CSB) is the food and nutrition program of Lifelong. We value the belief that food is medicine and are committed to client health. As such, our primary goal is to ensure clients receive nutritious food and nutrition education to support them in managing their health conditions while also serving as a tool of prevention. The clients CSB serves face stigma in a variety of forms including being food insecure and being low income. These circumstances put our clients at a greater risk for diet related health conditions including diabetes, overweight/obesity and hypertension.

Effective January 1st, 2020, CSB is adopting a Food and Nutrition Policy to demonstrate our commitment to the health and wellbeing of our clients. The policy is guided by the recommendations from the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, along with community needs assessments and client feedback. This policy serves as a tool for staff as well as volunteers to assist in decision making and communication related to food sourcing and distribution. The policy is a guide that ensures CSB will always put the health of clients above all else and prioritize foods that meet the highest nutrition standards.

Our policy will be implemented in phases. The following outlines each phase of our policy:

Phase I: January 1, 2020 Elimination of sweetened beverages and candy from inventory.

Phase II: April 1, 2020 Elimination of all products containing trans fats and hydrogenated oils from inventory.

Phase III: July 1, 2020 All canned vegetables will contain 140mg or less of sodium per serving and all canned fruits will be packed in water or light syrup. All canned or packaged soups, meals and proteins will contain 700mg or less of sodium per serving.

Phase IV: July 1, 2020 All grocery bags will contain items from each food group in proper quantities for clients to create 7 meals. Grocery bag categories will align with meal categories, which will be based on community need and cultural relevance.

We will review, evaluate, modify and improve our policy over the course of time. It will be a living document by which all food and nutrition programs will abide.

Sample Staff/Volunteer Interview Questions (post implementation)

Motivation to participate

- 1) How did you (and others) at your organization feel about making changes to the food bank with the intent of influencing client choices?
- 2) What did you see as the goal of this effort? (Prompt or explore to assess the extent to which the primary goals are related to health, increased client choice, better client experience, more organization efficiency or other goals)

Reflecting on the implementation process

- 3) Think about the behavioral economics or environmental change strategies you have tried in your food bank (e.g., changes in layout, posters, recipes, etc).
 - i) Of the strategies implemented so far, which strategies appear effective in helping clients make healthier choices and which don't?
 - (1) What might make these strategies more effective?
 - ii) Of the strategies implemented so far, which strategies have been easy to implement and which have been difficult?
 - (1) What might make these strategies easier to implement?
- 4) Are the changes in your food bank impacting some clients differently than others? Is this cause for concern? If so, what might address this concern?
- 5) How are the changes impacting staff and volunteer workload or organizational efficiency? Is this cause for concern? If so, what might address this concern?
- 6) Did any unintended benefits or negative consequences result from these changes? If so, what were these? What do you think should be done to address these, if anything?
- 7) What resources and supports have been required to make the changes to date? Are more resources or support needed? If so, what kind of resources or support is needed?

Looking forward

- 8) What data, input, or feedback is needed to determine what to do next?
- 9) Are there things you hoped to accomplish or changes you have hoped to make that you haven't addressed yet due to time, support, or other factors. If so, what are these?
- 10) What changes do you think the food bank should try next? What support or resources would be needed to do this?