

Tip Sheet: Evaluating Nutrition Policy Implementation and Impact

1. Choose evaluation questions.

- ✓ **Identify your evaluation purpose(s) and audience(s).** Your evaluation questions should have at least one clear purpose (e.g., accountability, learning, communication, reporting) and meet the needs of your audience(s).
- ✓ **Ask questions that address policy implementation and policy impact.** Questions about implementation can clarify what is required to better implement the policy. Questions about impact can address if and how your policy is changing program operations, food provided, and shopper outcomes or experiences.

What does it take to implement the policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What resources are used and needed to implement the policy? ● How and to whom are policy commitments communicated? ● What is challenging? What would improve implementation? What is facilitating success?
How has the policy impacted program operations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How have food bank operations changed due to policy implementation (e.g., service model, food sourcing, donor relationships)? To what extent are program operations meeting SMART goals? ● How consistently implemented are these changes?
How has the policy impacted food distributed/served and the food environment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How have donated, purchased, and distributed foods changed in line with policy commitments? To what extent is the available food meeting SMART goals? ● To what extent are healthy foods promoted, appealing, and accessible in the food bank?
How is the policy impacting shoppers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are more or different shoppers benefitting from services since the policy was implemented? ● Has policy implementation changed how shoppers feel about using program services, food availability, and food choices? ● Are shoppers receiving or selecting more foods that are healthy or that meet that their needs?

2. Identify and collect the data needed to answer your evaluation questions.

- ✓ **Collect data that reflect multiple perspectives** (shoppers, staff, volunteers, and donors).
- ✓ **Look for existing tools that you can use or adapt.** The Healthy Food Environments team has developed some tools that may be helpful to you, and we can point you to others (see pg. 2).
- ✓ **Think carefully about how to assess change.** To measure changes that have occurred, you can collect data before and after implementation, or just once after implementation in a way that asks specifically about whether/how/how much things have changed.



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3. Review, discuss, and use your findings – then plan to continue evaluating.

- ✓ **Share and use your data.** Review your data with key stakeholders to help you understand and interpret your findings. Use your findings for the purpose(s) you identified.
- ✓ **Evaluation should ideally be ongoing and iterative.** Evaluation activities can inform all stages of implementation and help when it is time to update the policy.

Types of Data:

Types of data	Advantages	Considerations
Administrative data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tracking orders of purchased food ● Compiling counts from shopper distribution records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data already exist ● Data can be available regularly, in a consistent format, and for long periods of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data might not be in the ideal form (e.g., paper, not electronic or by year instead of by week).
Observational assessments and inventories* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assessing the use of behavioral economics ● Assessing the nutritional content of foods ● Tracking food waste (lbs or cost) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Objective method for getting a snapshot at a moment in time about how things are happening ● The Healthy ● Some systems like SWAP could 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Given the variability in food sourcing, results may differ dramatically from day to day. ● Inventory assessments can be time consuming, but may be done periodically or on carefully selected samples of food. ● Using existing, pre-tested tools and guides for food assessments and environmental assessments may be helpful.
Surveys* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shopper survey on perceptions of foods and changes in the food bank ● Volunteer survey on perceptions of changes in the food bank and volunteer roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good way to get feedback from large numbers of people about relatively simple questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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.
Focus groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shopper focus groups to understand experiences using the food bank ● Donor focus groups to gauge reactions to request lists and messaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good for collecting rich data about more nuanced questions ● There are opportunities to clarify, pursue newly emerging ideas, and to explore differing perspectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● These require a skilled facilitator and note taker (audio recording can be helpful). ● Be ready to prioritize questions or enforce time limits to ensure all topics get addressed. ● Use and enforce ground rules to ensure all participants get a chance to speak. ● Relatively few people participate.

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<p>Interviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Volunteer interviews to get feedback on what they observe from operational changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good for collecting rich data from individuals with key perspectives ● There are opportunities for and clarification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● These require a skilled facilitator and note taker. Audio recording can be helpful. ● Ask open-ended questions. ● Be ready to prioritize questions or enforce time limits to ensure all topics get addressed.
<p>Cart assessments*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess the amount, types, or nutritional content of foods selected by shoppers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good for collecting objective data on food selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planning is required to ensure assessments are not disruptive to distribution flow. ● Incentives can boost response rates.

* The Healthy Food Environments Project has developed tools that may be useful.

