

Supplemental Materials – Thrive Food Pantry

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by

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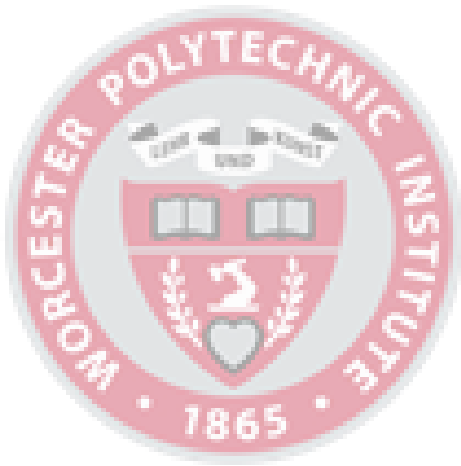
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A Proposal for the Interactive Qualifying Project: Thrive Food Pantry to Alleviate Food Security for Those with Developmental Disabilities in Worcester, MA

Chapter 1: Introduction

Food insecurity is defined as “lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life” (Hunger and Health, n.d., para. 2). It is one of the most persistent issues in the United States, and in 2019, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) found that approximately 10.5% of American households were food insecure during a portion of the year (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020, p. 4). The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the already profound hunger crisis affecting the United States. In 2020, 15.6% of the American population had experienced food insecurity (Feeding America, 2020, p. 2). Additionally, Massachusetts had a 59% increase in food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic, making it the U.S. state with the greatest food insecurity increase during the worldwide health crisis (Feeding America, 2020, p. 3). Therefore, considering the pandemic’s lasting impacts on the economy and families, there is a continued need for food donations and the work of charitable organizations to support those experiencing food insecurity in the United States.

Nevertheless, food insecurity disproportionately impacts different social groups in the American population, one of them being households with children and adults with disabilities. Information collected by the U.S. Census Bureau (2019) reveals that 48.2% of U.S. households with individuals with disabilities experienced food insecurity in 2019 and received food stamps through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (para. 26), also known as “SNAP.” Specialists have found that the connection between food insecurity and living with disabilities is “consistent across measures of sensory limitations, physical limitations, and emotional, cognitive and mental health issues” (Heflin et al., 2019, p. 221). Researchers also have learned that living with a disability can impede individuals from maintaining a stable job position, thus establishing a correlation between disabling health conditions and some of the risk factors for food insecurity in the United States (Heflin et al., 2019, pp. 224-225). The impacts that food insecurity has on individuals with disabilities vary depending on how their health conditions affect their daily lives. Individuals facing mobility issues often cannot obtain resources because of the absence of accessibility measures to aid them.

In spite of adverse circumstances, organizations are stepping in to support this demographic. A promising example of these institutions is Thrive Support & Advocacy, which is

a non-profit organization created during the 1970s to “empower youth and adults with developmental disabilities and their families to lead rich, active, and self-directed lives” (Thrive Support & Advocacy, n.d.-b, para. 1). Some of Thrive Support & Advocacy’s assistance mechanisms include food pantries and volunteer services to alleviate the social dilemmas afflicting individuals living with developmental disabilities in Massachusetts. Although Thrive Support & Advocacy has a contractual partnership with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Thrive Support & Advocacy, n.d.-a, para. 4), the organization’s services are centered mostly in and near the city of Marlborough, MA. The institution also has an office in Worcester, MA, and intends on expanding its services’ reach to the city. Aiming to fight food insecurity, Thrive Support & Advocacy sponsored this WPI project to support their client’s nutritional needs. To successfully address this challenge, our goal is to develop a long-term, sustainable plan for a Thrive Food Pantry at 100 Grove Street, Worcester, MA. To meet this goal, we will work to achieve the following four objectives:

1. collect demographical data on the population that the project is assisting while assessing their nutritional and accessibility needs,
2. connect with nearby food pantries to better understand effective operating procedures for a food pantry,
3. develop precise space and inventory plans, staffing schedules, blueprints, and other deliverables for the food pantry while considering the sponsor’s available space and budget, and
4. create partnerships with campuses, markets, and other organizations for the food pantry to continue functioning after the project’s completion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will cover the socioeconomic and health issues associated with food insecurity in households with individuals living with disabilities, followed by a description of the project's stakeholders and a characterization of the Thrive Food Pantry's site. The following sections also provide further information about the project's research objectives, case studies, and required components to develop the food pantry's long-term, sustainable plans.

2.1: Food Insecurity in the United States

Despite numerous governmental assistance mechanisms, such as SNAP, and food banks existing across the United States, food insecurity remains a prevalent issue for the country. In 2019, 10.5% of the United States' households had limited or uncertain food access because of factors such as insufficient financial resources (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020, p. 7).

Unfortunately, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the food insecurity crisis afflicting the U.S. population. The Washington Post journalist, Siobhan O'Grady (2021), wrote that "[f]or much of the world, the legacy of the pandemic will be impossible to untangle from the stark material inequities that worsened it — and that it exacerbated. Among the most dangerous of these: a mounting hunger crisis, set to grow even direr in 2021" (para. 2). O'Grady's observations were confirmed by statistical information that revealed that 15.6% of the American population had experienced food insecurity in 2020 (Feeding America, 2020, p. 2), which is a 5.1% increase from the data collected in 2019 (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020, p. 7). Considering the previous information about the ever-changing circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, hunger-related relief mechanisms, such as food banks and pantries, must be improved to address food insecurity in the United States more adequately.

2.1.1: Food Insecurity's Effects on Households with Individuals Living with Disabilities

The hunger crisis in the U.S. affects people disproportionately depending on their social groups. One example of one of a group that is affected highly disproportionately is the project's target demographic: individuals living with disabilities. Data reveals that 48.2% of U.S. households with individuals living with a disability experienced food insecurity in 2019 and received food stamps through the SNAP program to satisfy their families' nutritional needs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019, para. 26). Experts have also found that the connection between the unbalanced effects of food insecurity and disabilities occurred regardless of the categories of the limitations or health issues faced by this demographic (Heflin et al., 2019, p. 221).

Although the persistence of food insecurity is associated with obstacles such as unstable employment (Heflin et al., 2019, p. 224), the negative impacts faced by the food insecure population prevail regardless of an individuals' social group. Some examples of the health impacts suffered by the food insecure population include adiposity – a health condition in which the patient is severely overweight – (Myers et al., 2019, p. 1), diabetes, and hypertension (Gundersen & Ziliak, 2015, p. 5). These conditions can significantly decrease the quality of life of the food insecure population and worsen any underlying medical conditions or limitations that may afflict individuals living with a disability in the United States. Nevertheless, the United States' food insecurity rates oscillated significantly over the years despite the help of governmental assistance mechanisms, food banks, and support from non-profit organizations. Therefore, to address the hunger crisis more effectively in the United States, adjustments must be made in the long-term plans used by food pantries and other charitable organizations to support those experiencing food insecurity.

2.1.2: Elevated Food Insecurity Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic Experienced by Households that Include Individuals Living with Disabilities

As more people in the United States found themselves experiencing food insecurity during the coronavirus outbreak that started to spread in early 2020, the issue gained more attention on social media and through major news outlets. Although the rate of food insecurity had been the lowest in years in 2019, “more than 35 million people overall, including nearly 11 million children, were food insecure” (Feeding America, 2021, p. 2). As a result of the pandemic in 2020, Feeding America estimated “that 45 million people (1 in 7), including 15 million children (1 in 5), may have experienced food insecurity” (Feeding America, 2021, p. 3). Considering the high number of people who were already experiencing food insecurity before the coronavirus began disrupting lives, it begs the question of how this had not become a more widely known issue until now. Research suggests that demographics, systemic racism, unemployment, and poverty contribute to food insecurity and that food insecurity disproportionately affects social groups, including individuals with developmental disabilities, our project's target demographic.

Adults living with disabilities have a higher likelihood of living in poverty because they usually have a lower level of education and workforce participation than adults who do not live with disabilities (Brucker, 2017, p. 286). Studies show that adults with disabilities experience

poorer health and greater food insecurity than adults without disabilities because they cannot afford food with proper nutrition and the necessary support from healthcare or insurance due to difficult financial situations (Brucker, 2017, p. 286-287). These factors cause inequity and health impacts to grow further because the appropriate medical care often is delayed because of the cost of the required procedures and medications (Brucker, 2017, p. 286). Nevertheless, financial instability and the absence of insurance coverage are not the only dire circumstances afflicting our project's target demographic.

2.2: The Emergency Food System

In response to the hunger crisis in the United States, numerous organizations were created to address the dilemma and form emergency support networks known as a community food system. These support networks are comprised of local governments, emergency food organizations (such as soup kitchens, food banks, and food pantries), farmers and farm associations, philanthropic organizations, university extensions, and many other institutions (Clark et al., 2016, p. 311).

A food bank is a large establishment dedicated to storing and distributing food to other organizations as well as connecting food donors with food distributing agencies (Parker et al., 2019, p. 927) such as food pantries and soup kitchens. In contrast with food banks, food pantries are organizations that aid the food-insecure population by distributing unprepared food directly to a household's representative for their consumption (Long et al., 2019, p. 1), while soup kitchens are establishments that assist food-insecure households by distributing prepared meals to their target audience on a daily or weekly basis (Glasser, 2010, p. 15). Nevertheless, all three categories of emergency food organizations are indispensable to the success of emergency food systems (see **Figure 1**). In these community food systems, the food banks receive their food supply from food and agricultural industries and governmental nutrition assistance programs and function as donation distributors to the emergency food organizations (Parker et al., 2020, pp. 926-928).

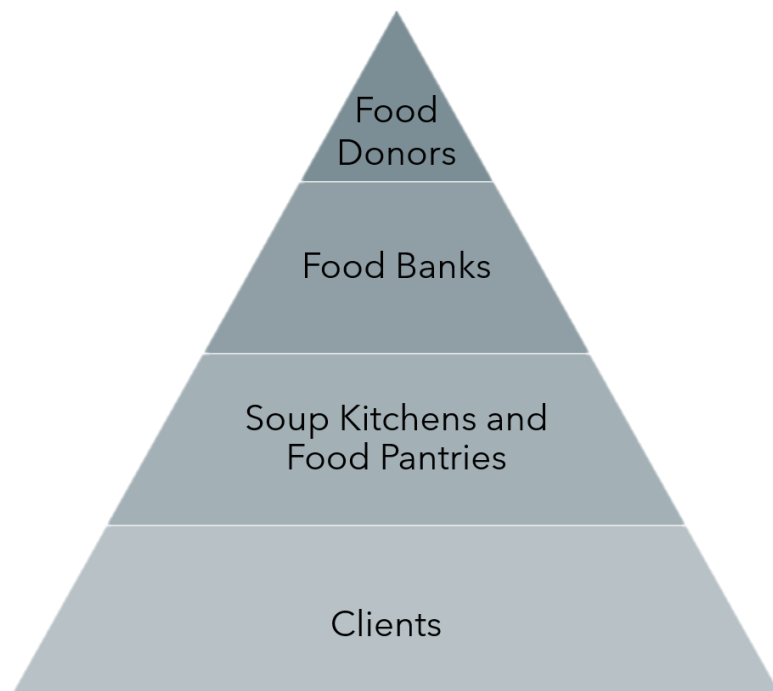


Figure 1:

The emergency food system

2.3 Project Stakeholders: Thrive Support & Advocacy and the Networking Fighting against Food Insecurity

Thrive Support & Advocacy (also referred to in this document as “Thrive”), is a non-profit organization, which was created during the 1970s to “empower youth and adults with developmental disabilities and their families to lead rich, active, and self-directed lives” (Thrive Support & Advocacy, n.d.-b, para. 1). They attempt to achieve this through food pantries and community services to alleviate the food insecurity and inequity afflicting individuals living with developmental disabilities in Massachusetts. Furthermore, Thrive wants to expand its services from Marlborough, MA, to better address the inequity afflicting individuals living with developmental disabilities in other parts of Massachusetts (Thrive Support & Advocacy, n.d.-a, para. 4-6). Therefore, Thrive sponsored our project to develop long-term, sustainable plans for a Thrive Food Pantry located in Worcester, MA. These circumstances placed the institution among the project’s highest internal stakeholders and beneficiaries while keeping the project’s success and cost-effectiveness in mind. Additionally, as the project’s sponsor, Thrive holds a level of influence over the progress of the project through its administration and resources.

A crucial component to the project's success will be the partnerships we form with organizations to adequately supply and distribute food to the food pantry's target audience. Parker et al. (2020) emphasizes the importance of forming partnerships to establish accountability and supply networks to effectively address food insecurity in the community food system's region and maintain the functionality of the network's food pantries and food banks (p. 924). Therefore, more internal and external stakeholders will be involved in the development and continuation of the Thrive Food Pantry.

One of the project's highly invested stakeholders is the university that connected the student researchers with Thrive: the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). The educational institution could contribute to the Thrive Food Pantry by monitoring the students working on the project and supporting them with the resources and contacts required for the research's success. Moreover, WPI can offer long-term assistance to the project through food donations and by allowing students to volunteer at the Thrive Food Pantry as staff members. An example of this partnership is a university in southwestern Ohio that successfully implemented a food pantry program to address student food insecurity on campus (Twill et al., 2016). Furthermore, considering the proximity of the Thrive Food Pantry's location from WPI's campus, the lessons learned in their research's discussion can be indispensable when developing the Thrive Food Pantry's long-term plans and establishing a partnership between WPI and the food pantry. Therefore, WPI and its students can benefit from the project by stimulating more student involvement in the Worcester community.

However, WPI is not the only organization that can contribute to the project through food donations. Local food banks and other institutions can assist the project by supplying the Thrive Food Pantry with food that can be used to prepare healthy meals (Parker et al., 2020, pp. 926-927). Furthermore, the donor organizations can benefit from the Thrive Food Pantry by repurposing their non-contaminated food as donations to the project. Hence, these organizations are among the project's high internal stakeholders because of their role as food suppliers.

The project's primary external stakeholders and who can benefit the most from the Thrive Food Pantry are individuals living with developmental disabilities in Worcester, MA. As the project's target demographic, clients can benefit from the Thrive Food Pantry by receiving the healthy meals offered by the food pantry to satisfy their nutritional requirements. Thus, the

project's clients are among the highest external stakeholders in creating the Thrive Food Pantry's sustainable plans.

As the project's chosen location, the City of Worcester and its inhabitants can benefit from the project through the improvement of the community's quality of life and food security circumstances. Additionally, the city can contribute to the project by granting funding and approval for the Thrive Food Pantry's plans. However, the city's inhabitants can also assist the project by donating non-contaminated food products, thus supplying the food pantry's inventory.

Although the Thrive Food Pantry will benefit Thrive's clients, providing their clients with food with the necessary nutritional values is not as simple as it seems. Since Thrive's clients are individuals living with disabilities, there are complications on how the food will be distributed or delivered based on each individual's disability. According to Heflin et al. (2019) "[d]isabilities are associated with food insecurity through multiple pathways" (p. 220), which include work-limiting disabilities, functional/cognitive limitations, mobility limitations, trouble managing money, and trouble seeing or hearing (Heflin, 2019, p. 221). Therefore, it is vital for the Thrive Food Pantry to accommodate individuals living with mobility limitations since food pantries require clients to take large amounts of food off-site to prepare their meals at home (Heflin, 2019, p. 225). Considering that these factors would allow the Thrive Food Pantry to successfully cater to everyone's needs, provide the means necessary for all their clients to receive food from the pantry, and significantly improve food security for Worcester households with individuals living with a disability.

2.4: Food Pantry Site Description

The food pantry will be housed in Thrive's Worcester Office on 100 Grove St., Worcester, Massachusetts. Many clients already see their social workers at this location. Our first interview for the project was with the project's sponsor, Mr. Rose, Thrive's CEO and President. After talking with him, we were able to get a better idea of how we would be designing the food pantry. The site itself appeared to be under construction. The space for the food pantry will be a long room divided into sections. It will have plenty of space for storage and other activities. While we do not have a construction plan, Mr. Rose was able to identify the general designation of the pantry's potential amenities. The pantry would have cold storage, general (room-temperature) storage, and spaces for clubs or group activities.

When first entering the pantry, there will be a pickup area for food. Mr. Rose wanted a hybrid food pantry. This means there will be boxes already prepared with food to which clients will be able to add other food necessary for their diet. The entrance with all the food should be an easy-to-clean surface that will not affect those with allergies. The *Architect's Pocket Book* recommends, “[s]tainless steel is the only material for serious long-term use for kitchen worktops” (Baden-Powell, 2005, p. 161). Stainless steel is preferred by most modern kitchens for its purity. Steel is a very hygienic surface and will remain in good condition for years to come. It is not immune to wear and tear from things like limescale, however, but it is much easier to clean. When Mr. Rose was giving our group a tour of the food pantry, he noted that the pantry would have ample space for cabinets and cold storage.

Most food pantries require both general and cold storage. General storage is required for tools and nonperishables. Cabinets are the best solution as they can be placed at ground level and above the workspace. **Figure 2** shows suggested cabinet placements to accommodate average heights. The overhead cabinets should incorporate lighting to illuminate the work surface.

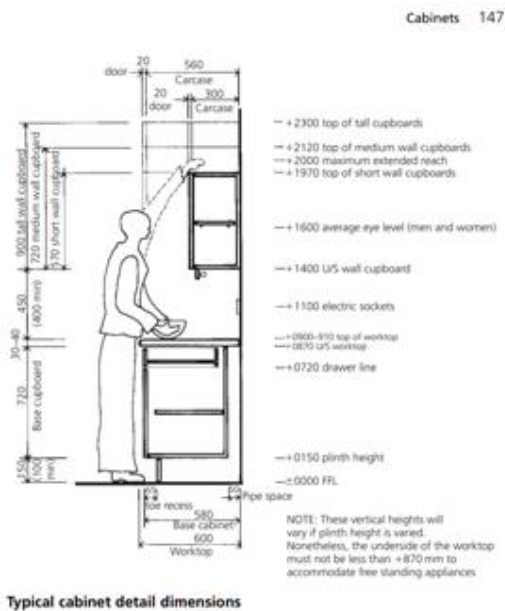


Figure 2:

Typical cabinet detail dimensions. Source: Baden-Powell, 2005, p. 147

Since many people visiting the site have disabilities, we will be following public building codes to provide enough accessibility to those that need it. One solution could be lower shelf placements. The ability to reach a large variety of items in a more accessible location would

make the clients feel like they are not restricted to what they have the ability to reach or access. Not everything can be stored in just cabinets, therefore refrigerators will also be required.

It would be best to use large commercial refrigerators or walk-in refrigerators. Depending on how much food is involved, we must consider refrigeration versus freezing. Freezing will keep food preserved longer but will require time to properly thaw. It can also degrade the food quality. These factors can be discussed and resolved through communication with the sponsor and their plans for food distribution. If we are moving food fast, we will not need as much long-term storage.

2.5: Case Studies for the Development of the Thrive Food Pantry's Plans

As part of our research to develop a sustainable plan for the Thrive Food Pantry, we analyzed two case studies regarding important concepts that can improve our project's methodology and deliverables. The first case study assesses how behavioral economics could improve our clients' experiences at the Thrive Food Pantry and assist the pantry's clients when making healthier meal choices inside and outside the pantry's establishment. The second case study discusses the practices of a food pantry called Freshplace and how their food distribution and inventory methods can help us develop a more thorough and efficient long-term plan for the Thrive Food Pantry.

2.5.1: The Effectiveness of a Behavioral Economics Approach to Improving Healthy Food Selection among Food Pantry Clients

This case study observes how behavioral economics can increase a food pantry's effectiveness and enhance the quality of the experience of a food pantry's clients. The researchers' goals were to examine how SuperShelf intervention, which consists of shelf display modifications, food quantity and variety improvements, and marketing advancements, could increase the amount of nutritious food available for the food pantry's clients. Additionally, the experts wanted to analyze how a behavioral economics approach, such as using signage to emphasize healthier food choices over unhealthy meals, can improve their clients' food choices. To test their hypotheses, the researchers observed two intervention pantries (A and B) and two control pantries' (C and D) food inventories before and after the staff training and assortment modifications required for the SuperShelf intervention to be implemented. Moreover, the researchers observed the clients' food carts after the behavioral economics alterations were made

and conducted surveys to assess the clients' demographic data and the impacts of the modifications that their research encouraged (Caspi et al., 2019, p. 2305-2306).

The researchers used data models for the demographic information collected in surveys to optimize their data analysis and discussion. They concluded that the SuperShelf intervention and the behavioral economics approach are associated with an increase in the number of servings of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables at sites A and B (Caspi et al., 2019, p. 2308). Sites A and B increased their Healthy Eating Index-2010 (HEI-2010) scores by 8 and 19 points, respectively, while C and D had slight decreases in their HEI-2010 scores. However, the researchers concluded that the assortment alterations at sites C and D were most likely caused by seasonal changes (Caspi et al., 2019, pp. 2308-2309).

When evaluating the impacts of the behavioral economics approach at the food pantry sites, Site A successfully implemented the suggested alterations for the experiment at the scheduled follow-up time despite not using any branded signage (Caspi et al., 2019, p. 2311). This outcome indicated that, even though user-friendly signage is a component in the SuperShelf and behavioral economics approaches, they are not a crucial part of the methodologies' success. Therefore, an appropriate assessment of the food pantries' readiness and procedures before implementing the SuperShelf and behavioral economics approaches is indispensable to yield a more cost-effective and timelier optimization process. Moreover, understanding the food pantry clients' motivations and food choices is another core component of behavioral economics' success, thus highlighting the demographic data's value when improving a food pantry's plans.

2.5.2: Food Security, Self-Sufficiency, and Diet-Quality Outcomes of a Food Pantry Program

This study looks at the effectiveness of an organization called Freshplace, which is a food pantry that also provides lessons in food security. Their goal is to fight not just hunger but food insecurity. To have food security means having a reliable and sufficient amount of nutritious food. Food insecurity is just the opposite, and one of the primary reasons people turn to food pantries or soup kitchens. For so long, food pantries have just been handing out food. However, Freshplace is changing the way food pantries are thinking by educating people on how to change their lifestyles with the goal that less people will require the services of food pantries.

In this study, 228 adults were split into two groups. The first was the control group, which received a regular supply of food for a year. They went to normal food pantries and had

no change in their daily lives. The other group, or the Freshplace group, were given food but with the addition of monthly check-ins about how to manage food insecurity. Their strategy assumes that those who are given enough motivation will be the force of their own change.

To get a baseline for their study, a survey of the participants was issued. Both groups showed very similar results, with the only factor being that the Freshplace group had fewer participants. Martin et al. (2013) found that:

The sample was predominantly single, black women with at least a high school degree. At baseline, participants visited multiple food pantries on a chronic basis, with 63% going at least once per week and 38% visiting three or more pantries. More than half (57%) of participants received SNAP, and 42% ate meals at a soup kitchen. (p. 572)

The surveys found that many have “[a] high prevalence of chronic health conditions was reported, including 26% with diabetes and 65% with high blood pressure. Almost one third (31%) were overweight, 30% were obese, and 10% were morbidly obese (BMI > 40)” (Martin et al., 2013, p. 572). It may seem counterintuitive that people with less food could be overweight. This can be explained by the prevalence of substituting a healthy diet with junk food. Many of the subjects were found to have poor diets, with half getting less than three servings of fruits and vegetables per day, and Freshplace aims to address this concern.

To determine if food security was improving due to the Freshplace intervention, every three months, a score was given to each group based on their self-sufficiency and fruit and vegetable score. The control group decreased every month. After one year, Freshplace members had an additional serving of fruits and vegetables. Most of the clients were not getting the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables in their diet. By adding an extra serving, their body is healthier and more energized. This is important for households with children as many of the food-insecure people were not just providing for themselves but for their children too. Parents put their child’s wellbeing above their own; hence if the parents are eating healthier, it is assumed that the children are also getting more food on their plate. This approach has many benefits on a child’s developing body and mind, leading them to achieve more academically and obtain overall improvements in their physical and mental health.

Although food pantries are meant to offer temporary relief, many have become permanent institutions. Without a change to the food pantry system, “[c]ontinuing to distribute more food without addressing the underlying causes of poverty is an approach that has failed to

adequately reduce food insecurity” (Martin et al., 2013, p. 574). Instead of promoting reliance on the food products of pantries, what is needed is guidance in a community to better understand nutrition and ways to get food. By educating the clients, the need for food pantries can be reduced.

2.5.3: Case Study Comparisons

Both case studies share a similar conclusion: food pantries play an essential role in the health of the food-insecure population that goes to food pantries, not just to provide food for the body but also to provide food for the mind. These studies show that with the intervention and assistance provided by a food pantry, whether it be through modifications in the food pantry, emphasizing healthier food choices, or conducting monthly check-ins, clients can and do tend to have improved healthy behavior due to the motivation and education they acquire to change their lifestyle. A food pantry’s influence can significantly affect the lives of its clients by promoting healthy foods and eating habits and leaving them with a better understanding of how they can stay food secure.

2.5.4: How the Lessons Learned from the Case Studies Will Assist When Planning for the Thrive Food Pantry

A strong vision the project’s sponsor has for the food pantry is to not just provide food for the individuals living with disabilities but to provide them with an education on healthy eating habits and how they can stay food secure. The results and conclusions made from both of these case studies will help us build our methodological process, the ideal approaches to serve all of Thrive’s clients, and effectively implement a learning environment within the community.

Considering the researchers’ conclusions and methodological approaches from the first case study, we concluded that our project could collect demographic data about the food pantry’s potential clients from Thrive to increase the project’s timeliness and cost-effectiveness. However, to increase the depth of our research’s results, we believe that interviews with social workers would be an effective way to collect information about the nutritional needs and accessibility accommodations that the Thrive Food Pantry should address. Moreover, our project will identify a database where the inventory could be monitored adequately to maintain an assortment of healthy food for the pantry’s clients.

After analyzing the conclusions made from the researchers conducting the second case study, we plan to implement an education component on food insecurity, the causes of food

insecurity, and steps an individual can take to change and improve a healthy lifestyle into the program of the Thrive Food Pantry. After measurements are taken, we will then be able to design the floor plan of the space provided for the food pantry to include a portion of the space dedicated to a learning space where individuals can learn how to live a healthy lifestyle with nutritious food.

2.6: Summary

Based on our findings from the literature, our methodology will primarily utilize interviews to collect more in-depth information about the accessibility accommodations and nutritional needs that the food pantry requires to better alleviate the food insecurity associated with our demographic's socioeconomic circumstances. Moreover, the Thrive Food Pantry will use partnerships, design specifications, and food assortment criteria to ensure that the food pantry's clients will have access to healthy meals that satisfy their nutritional needs. Finally, our project will consider the population's recovery from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in the Thrive Food Pantry's long-term plans to remedy the increased rates of food insecurity afflicting our target demographic.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The goal of this project is to develop a long-term, sustainable plan for a community-oriented Thrive Food Pantry in Worcester, MA. Thus, to achieve this goal, we will focus on the following objectives:

1. collect demographical data on the population that the project is assisting while assessing their nutritional and accessibility needs,
2. connect with nearby food pantries to better understand effective operating procedures for a food pantry,
3. develop precise space and inventory plans, staffing schedules, blueprints, and other deliverables for the food pantry while considering the sponsor's available space and budget, and
4. create partnerships with campuses, markets, and other organizations for the food pantry to continue functioning after the project's completion.

3.1: Collecting Data about the Project's Demographic

To better understand our target audience's needs, we will collect demographic data about the food pantry's clients from Thrive Support & Advocacy and conduct interviews with social workers and caseworkers who assist individuals living with disabilities in Worcester, MA.

Although Thrive can disclose the demographic data (age, gender, race, marital status, education, employment, ethnicity, income, number of children, living situation, and the presence of disabilities) about the food pantry's clients, there is case information associated with nutritional needs, dietary requirements adopted for medical treatment purposes, and accessibility needs that are not mentioned in state building regulations, such as the Ninth Edition of the M.A. State Building Code (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2018), or federal building codes such as the American Disabilities Act Standards for Accessibility Design (Department of Justice, 2010). Thus, our project group will conduct individual, semi-standardized interviews with five social workers or caseworkers to better understand the needs and living conditions of the project's target audience.

The individual, semi-standardized interview mode was selected to allow the interviewers to investigate matters more in-depth with the key informant when unexpected nuances appear during the interaction while still having a structure to rely on when necessary (Berg & Lune, 2011, p. 109). Moreover, we chose to conduct semi-standardized interviews instead of surveys

because interviews allow us to interact directly with our key informants and gather information in a more in-depth manner by granting us the possibility of asking follow-up questions and selecting the questions we will investigate further in subsequent interactions. A sample interview guide for our social worker and caseworker interactions is in **Appendix B**. The interviews will be conducted via Zoom because of the circumstances of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. There will be at least two team members in the online call; one will be transcribing the interviewee's responses while the other will be conducting the interview. If the interviewee authorizes us, we will also have a recording of the interview to allow the research team to collect more information that may have been missed during the first transcription. Because of our project's time constraints, we decided to interview five public welfare workers to gather information about our target demographic's nutritional, medical, and accessibility needs. Furthermore, to respect our interviewee's time, we will aim to keep the duration of our social worker and caseworker interviews below one hour.

After completing all our online interviews, we will begin data analysis by listening to our interview recordings and reading our first transcriptions to notice any patterns or similarities between the interactions. We will code the interviews to identify themes and extract relevant data for our research about our target audience's nutritional and accessibility needs (Campbell et al., 2013, pp. 311-313). Once the coding process has been repeated to the point where no new themes emerge, we will lump or split codes (Campbell et al., 2013, pp. 299-301) to subdivide and group information to better understand the dietary and accessibility requirements that our inventory and space plans must accommodate to better assist the food pantry's clients. We intend on spending the project's second and third weeks collecting our demographic and qualitative interview data and analyzing the compiled information during week four through six.

3.2: Connecting with Nearby Food Pantries

To connect with nearby food pantries to better understand the plans and procedures needed to operate a food pantry most effectively and efficiently. We will begin by conducting a semi-standardized in-depth interview with a key informant (Thrive) to collect more information about the food pantry's objectives. We will also reach out via email to other food pantries that offer similar services to what the Thrive Food Pantry and schedule interviews and visual resource assessments at their sites. We will visit three of the food pantries with which we have successfully established connections in Worcester to conduct interviews along with an on-site

assessment of their amenities and procedures by using observational methods such as taking measurements and observing the location's layout (Eyler et al., 2015, pp. 640-641). Then we will conduct semi-standardized interviews with staff members and managers at the food pantries where we conduct our visual resource assessments.

One organization providing emergency food pantry services is Centro. Collaborating with the Worcester County Food Bank and other nearby food pantries, "CENTRO operates the second largest food pantry in Worcester" (Centro, n.d., para. 2). To obtain knowledge and advice for sustainable plans to run the Thrive Food Pantry, we will interview professional staff, organizers, and volunteers from Centro and other nearby food pantries via Zoom after scheduling appointments with the key informants via email. We also plan to collaborate with the Worcester County Food Bank (WCFB), as they have helped many food pantries in the area before. However, we will also be reaching out to two other organizations to investigate effective operating procedures for the Thrive Food Pantry: Friendly House (n.d.) and the Northborough Food Pantry (n.d.). We chose to contact these food pantries because their mission and their programs align with Thrive's goal to fight food insecurity afflicting individuals with developmental disabilities in Worcester. However, we will also reach out to the non-profit organization called Avenues to Independence (n.d.) because their mission and community programs align with Thrive's goal to create a more inclusive environment for their clients and empower them to live fulfilling lives.

We will also connect with food banks and food pantries through the WCFB (Worcester County Food Bank, n.d.) and ask if we can conduct interviews with their employees as well as visit their food pantry sites to observe the logistical and organizational procedures required during a typical workday at a food pantry and the location's layout. However, the visual resource assessment will be one hour and thirty minutes as we wish to respect our host time, while still allowing for a full site visit. We will also utilize the Ninth Edition of the M.A. State Building Code and the Architect's Pocket Book of Kitchen Design (Baden-Powell, 2005) to learn about the regulations that the Thrive Food Pantry will have to abide by before devising our plans regarding design, food categories, and staffing. Some questions that we would like to present during interviews can be found in **Appendix D**.

3.3: Developing the Food Pantry's Deliverables

To better understand the sponsor's ideas and the resources available at the food pantry's site, we will conduct a visual resource assessment on May 17, 2021, using observational methods to gather information about the location's dimension measurements, layout, and amenities. Once we have this information and the data detailed in sections 3.1 and 3.2, we will triangulate the data we collected from our visual assessments and interviews (Beebe, 2014, pp. 46-51) to determine the ideal approaches to address the food insecurity affecting our target demographic and begin developing the food pantry's deliverables with Thrive. Two of our team's members have experience creating blueprints and space plans, which will allow those documents to be completed in a timelier manner. We chose to develop the blueprint and space plans in a program called Revit because it is an effective way to create a detailed site plan that displays the space's measurements and amenities (Autodesk, n.d., para. 1-8).

Furthermore, we selected the spiraling research approach as a model for how we will approach developing the deliverables. The method allows researchers to add more layers of depth to their research by studying a subject in a cyclical process, thus granting researchers the ability to continually revise their research questions, results, and literature reviews (Berg & Lune, 2011, pp. 25-26). The spiraling research method makes the revision and drafting processes more dynamic and effective while considering the time constraints in the project's proposed timeline. We intend on spending the project's first week conducting our baseline assessment and weeks five through seven preparing and revising our deliverables in partnership with Thrive because the revision process requires a larger time frame for all the matters to be addressed successfully.

3.4: Creating Partnerships with Other Organizations

We will conduct semi-standardized in-depth interviews with representatives from the Worcester County Food Bank, Friendly House, Centro Inc., and the Northborough Food Pantry (see section 3.2) to gain a deeper understanding of their operations. We wish to better understand the inner workings of food pantries to create our own successful plan, which includes getting food supplied to the pantry from local food banks and grocery stores. By connecting with the Worcester County Food Bank, we will optimize our time by efficiently connecting with other food pantries whose ideals coincide with Thrive's, thus allowing us to determine what other places could donate food to the Thrive Food Pantry.

We will first reach out formally to the organizations via email and a follow-up phone call. The objective is to build connections with stores and markets that can partner with us. Finding alternative food sources for the food pantry puts less strain on the large food banks. We will also reach out to WPI’s food supplier, Chartwell, to get extra food from the kitchen. We also want to reach out to organizations that specialize in helping those that are living or live with someone with disabilities, such as Avenues to Independence. To properly prepare for our interviews, we will conduct initial research about each organization, which will include looking through their websites and news articles to better understand them. Our preliminary findings have led to some general questions, as seen in **Appendix D**. However, more specific questions tailored to our selected organizations will be established later.

3.5: Proposed Timeline

Timeline	Week 1 (05/17-05/21)	Week 2 (05/24-05/28)	Week 3 (05/31-06/04)	Week 4 (06/07-06/11)	Week 5 (06/14-06/18)	Week 6 (06/21-06/25)	Week 7 (06/28-07/02)
Visual Resource Assessment							
Networking for Partnerships							
Interviews with Social Workers and Caseworkers							
Organization Interviews							
Data Analysis							
Drafting and Revising Deliverables							

Chapter 4: Conclusion

By focusing on our four objectives, we aim to create a sustainable plan for a community-oriented food pantry that can effectively fight food insecurity in Worcester, MA, thus improving the quality of life of the city's inhabitants by granting them access to healthy meals. Therefore, the project's goal aligns with two of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Goal 2: Zero Hunger; and Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being (United Nations, 2015, para. 34-54). The SDGs have the purpose of creating a more inclusive and equitable society in which current and future generations can live and participate. However, to achieve our goal and establish a stable circulation of food and people at the Thrive Food Pantry, we will be seeking a partnership with local grocery stores, food pantries, soup kitchens, philanthropic organizations, and non-profit organizations. All the organizations are working to fight one thing: hunger. Therefore, we wish to benefit from partnerships to obtain food donations and exposure for our food pantry. The project will also assist the network of organizations fighting food insecurity in Worcester, MA, by increasing the area and number of people being served.

In light of this, we recognize the benefits that the Thrive Food Pantry will have for the project's target demographic and the quality of life in Worcester, MA. Furthermore, we desire to assist and support Thrive's mission through the project's development and continuation. We look forward to working with Thrive to develop the Thrive Food Pantry's long-term plans and effectively assist individuals living with disabilities in Worcester.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Verbal Interview Consent Script for Social Workers and Caseworkers

As a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Massachusetts, we would like to invite you to participate in an interview for our research to learn more about how food insecurity impacts individuals living with disabilities in Worcester, MA. The purpose of our research is to develop long-term, sustainable plans for a Thrive Food Pantry in Worcester. The kind of information that we aim to get from the interview is the accessibility, nutritional, and medical dietary needs that our project should consider when developing the food pantry's plans. We anticipate that the interview should take less than one hour.

This is a collaborative project between Thrive Support & Advocacy and WPI, and your participation is greatly appreciated. Information from our project will be published in a publicly available academic document at the end of our term and we can share a copy of our results if you are interested. No names or identifying information will appear in any of the project reports or publications unless you give us consent to do so.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. This also means that you can skip any questions that you want. Do you have any questions for us about this interview?

For more information about this research and the rights of research participants, you may contact us by email gr-thrivefoodpantryiqp-d21@wpi.edu or the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair (Dr. Kent Rissmiller, Tel. 508-831-5019, Email: kjr@wpi.edu) or Human Protection Administrator (Gabriel Johnson, Tel. 508-831-4989, Email: gjohnson@wpi.edu). Thank you very much for your time and consideration!

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Data Collection from Social Workers and Caseworkers

Topics	Questions
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good morning/afternoon/evening! Before we start the interview, we have a few questions for you: • Ask for their consent to interview. They will not receive any compensation for their participation. • Do you authorize us to record this interview?
Career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long have you been working as a social worker/caseworker? • How long have you worked in the Worcester area?
Nutritional Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the nutritional needs that individuals living with disabilities cannot usually meet through resources like the supermarket?
Dietary Needs Associated with Health Conditions/Medical Treatments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you recall working with individuals living with disabilities that had unique dietary needs associated with health conditions or medical treatments? • If so, what were the measures required to adequately address this medical dietary need?
Accessibility Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any accessibility needs that you believe more buildings and institutions should address in their blueprints?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any staffing accommodations that you believe can improve an institution’s accessibility protocol?
<p>Food Pantries Assisting Individuals Living with Disabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any mechanisms that you believe would be beneficial to the food pantry and its clients? • What are some of your recommendations for approaching food banks, food pantries, and other non-profit organizations to establish partnerships? • What are some valuable resources for our project’s demographic that you believe we should keep in mind during our planning phase?
<p>Conclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there any information regarding any of this interview’s topics that you would like to add to this discussion? • Thank you once again for participating in this interview.

Appendix C: Verbal Interview Consent Script for Food Pantry Staff Members

As a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Massachusetts, we would like to invite you to participate in an interview for our research to learn more about the effective operating procedures required to manage a food pantry. The purpose of our research is to develop long-term, sustainable plans for a Thrive Food Pantry in Worcester, MA. The kind of information that we aim to get from the interview is how the food pantry is operated. We anticipate that the interview should take less than one hour and thirty minutes.

This is a collaborative project between Thrive Support & Advocacy and WPI, and your participation is greatly appreciated. Information from our project will be published in a publicly available academic document at the end of our term and we can share a copy of our results if you are interested. No names or identifying information will appear in any of the project reports or publications unless you give us consent to do so.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. This also means that you can skip any questions that you want. Do you have any questions for us about this interview?

For more information about this research and the rights of research participants, you may contact us by email gr-thrivefoodpantryiqp-d21@wpi.edu or the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair (Dr. Kent Rissmiller, Tel. 508-831-5019, Email: kjr@wpi.edu) or Human Protection Administrator (Gabriel Johnson, Tel. 508-831-4989, Email: gjohnson@wpi.edu). Thank you very much for your time and consideration!

Appendix D: Interview Guide for Food Pantry Organizers, Staff and Volunteers

Interviewee’s Profession or Interview Topic	Corresponding Questions
Introduction Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce ourselves and our organization’s goal. Explain the nature of this interview and its goal. • Ask for their consent for the interview. They will also not receive any compensation.
Introduction Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What organization are you representing? • Can you describe what your organization does in your own words? • Can you tell me more about how your organization fights food insecurity? • How does your organization benefit those living with developmental disabilities?
Organizers/Professional Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of food do you serve the public? How much? • How do you track your inventory? • How do you track volunteers? • What technologies(programs) do you use to manage other parts of the pantry? • How much storage do you typically need for (said amount) of food? • How many staff do you typically have actively working on-site at one time? Is it affected by the time of day, season, demand, or other factors? • What cleanliness expectations are there? If there have been any modifications to staffing

	<p>or distribution due to COVID-19 safety protocols, what are they, and how have they affected productivity? ***side note: they have a link on their website with this information, but the link is broken***</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What expenses did you need to prepare and start your food pantry/ food bank’s operations?
<p>Staff/Volunteers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often do you contribute to the services that your food pantry/ food bank provides to the public? • Are there exceptions and specific varieties of food that the food pantry distributes that meet the nutrition requirements for people with disabilities, allergies, other medical conditions, or people who are vegetarian or vegan?
<p>Partnership Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you be willing to partner/help our upcoming food pantry? • What do you need to receive in our partnership? • How can we formally establish a partnership with your organization? • What resources can you provide?
<p>Conclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there any information that you would like to add to this discussion? • Thank them for participating in this interview.

Notes from Interview with Project Sponsor

April 28, 2021

Responses are in **BLUE**.

Consent to Interview

- We would like to record this interview, is that alright with you?
- No one outside of our group will have access to the full interview. The recorded information may be used in our report. Is that okay?
- There is no compensation.
- Participation is voluntary and can be terminated at any time.
- Do you understand? **Agreement to Interview**

Introductory Questions

- How long have you been working at Thrive? **Since March 16, 2020.**
- What motivated you to start working at Thrive? **I worked in the mental health field for 25 years in schools and therapy for private/public schools. 13 years at an agency, moved away from the non-profit. I started working with mental health for young boys, Thrive is my passion.**
- How did you have the idea for the Thrive Food Pantry? **Thrive's History: 2 women who wanted a better life for their children with disabilities. 50 years have gone by, and the project evolved. Slowly been growing. They want to have a focus that resembles that of a mom/pop shop. I have been Worcester since Jan 1. Provide anyone with disabilities help. We have group homes efforts in Marlborough.**
- **Thrive is connected to 41 towns around Marlborough and our interviewee is a city council member in Worcester.**
- **The food pantry idea started because of Covid (Turkeys for thanksgiving). More research showed more food insecurities in their target audience (ASD, ID, and DD population).**
- **Community fridges have not been able to keep up.**

Questions regarding the Thrive Food Pantry

- What is your vision for this food pantry?
- What type of food pantry would you like the pantry to be (client-choice or boxed food approach)? **Hybrid of both. We cannot tell people what they should eat, and the method can empower them to be smarter about their food choices. Boxed food would be used for covid safety.**
- Any other information you would like to share relating to the design of the pantry?

Video Description:

- **The sponsor wants a greeting table with food (like a pickup area).**
- **There is a large space for food storage.**
- **We could have commercial freezers or walk-in fridges.**
- **Club space for socialization, community involvement, and lessons.**
- **Maybe have a lending library for families (informational books)**
- **Many products are cheaper at the moment due to the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- **\$5 a month for donations.**
- **Teach people by having them work in the Thrive Food Pantry.**
- Would you want this food pantry to provide additional services like food security education or mental health help? **We have a family support and navigation program. Our organization works at the intersection of mental health and outreaching. We would also include wellness and educational programs.**
- **We could have HUD funds – Housing Urban Development for a greenhouse, which could give extra food for the pantry.**
- Since many people with disabilities aren't as mobile, we would like to consider a delivery service. How do you feel about this idea? **We could use that to bring Covid vaccines and tests to those in need. They are one of the greatest needs at the moment.**

Questions regarding our Methodology and Information for our Research

- We wish to partner with local agencies that deal with food insecurity like Worcester County Food Bank. Is it acceptable that we can reach out to other organizations for long term security? **Any way to get food is good. Simple and clear with what is needed (Help and Food). Use EBT cards.**

- Considering that part of our methodology will require interviews with social workers and caseworkers that work with the project's demographic, can you connect us with social workers and caseworkers that are employees at Thrive? **You can visit our Marlborough site. We will connect you with our Family Support Navigators.**
- **We serve 750 families a year.**
- Do you have any suggestions of topics that we should address during the deliverables' production? **We do not have exact site dimensions at the moment.**
- We will need access to the following data components or connections with these individuals for our research:
 - o Site plans
 - o Social workers
 - o Potential Food Pantry Clients in Worcester

Thank you for your response. Feel free to contact us with any follow up information.

- **We will have another interview with our sponsor on May 17 at 11 am. Some other social workers will be interviewing us at that time.**

We are also looking for cookbooks for the learning library.

Sensory Room Item List from Interview at Thrive's Marlborough SiteI th
May 24, 2021

- Floor Mats
- Bean bags
- Yoga balls
- Sensory bin
- Calming/soothing lights (maybe light blue)
- Music machine or White Noise Machine
- Fidget Toys
- Bubbles
- Sensory touch components (like sensory books with the textures)
- Keyboards
- Musical keyboards
- Bouncing balls with handles
- Body socks
- Magnetic Moon Sand
- Plastic tools (for kids to play with the magnetic moon sand)
- Lego wall
- STEM-centered objects (like mini-tools)

Club Area Items List from Interview at Thrive's Marlborough Site
May 24, 2021

- Gaming Console (interview with Caitlin revealed that Wii isn't preferred by our clients)
 - Nintendo Switch
 - PlayStation
 - Xbox
- Planting stuff for areas near windows (pots, seeds, soil, etc.)
- Chalkboard paint (dark green and black are the preferred colors according to the interview with Caitlin)
- TV
- Crayons
- Markers
- Chalk
- White Paper

Child-proofing Items

- Cabinets (cabinets that can be latched are preferred)
- Caps for unused power sockets

Notes from Interview with Researcher and Worcester Regional Food Hub

June 3, 2021

Introduction of Thrive

Introduction of Team Members

Technical Difficulties

Agreed to recording.

Researcher

Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

- He is an Economic Development Fellow.
- Can help us find grant opportunities.
- Masters' Thesis is about food insecurity in Worcester.
- Works with our sponsor a lot

Worcester Regional Food Hub (WRFH)

Director of Worcester Regional Food Hub (which has wholesale and community kitchen components within the organization)

- AgroEco Project, Boy and Girls Club, hospitals.
- Local and seasonal produce, hydroponics, dairy, homemade products made in their kitchen.
- Local food (Massachusetts).
- Works with UMass Healthcare for a Pharmacy Food Pantry.

Partnerships Questions

- Finding Foods that address the Big 8.
- WRFH can help find those products.
- Helps teach food safety.
- Sesame is going to be added to the Big 8.

Tracking Inventory

- Worcester Regional Food Hub
- Excel sheet, google sheet.
- Simple to use and easy to share.

Storage

- Reach-in or walk-in fridges.

Staffing

- Individuals picking through is not safe.
- Worcester Regional Food Hub has 3 people working.

Grant Application: Sullivan

- Keep a Detailed Budget (Researcher) for grants.
- This is grant season, USDA, MDAR, Worcester based.
- Might have some ideas.
- Get everything in order, all they want to see is where their money is going

Food Insecurity in zip codes

- 2019 Data
- <http://www.justicemap.org/>
- <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/> *

*Food deserts. Not the full story. New terms for better defining food insecurities.

Considerations

- Coalition for Healthy Greater Worcester.
- United Way, coordinating body.
- Greater Worcester Community Foundation.
- Letters of Support (R & S can help).
- Hope Foundation Central Massachusetts.

Notes from Interview with Friendly House

June 4, 2021

Client-choice vs. Boxed Food

- Pre-boxed but can change if they don't like something.
- Works to address their clients' need as they appear.

Storage:

- Mass storage for everything
- Shelves, Fridges, freezers
- 2 regular fridges, 3 industrial fridges

Nutritional and Accessibility Needs:

- Hard to find specific diet foods.

Food Sources:

- Long term member of the Worcester County Food Bank (St. John, Supermarkets, Rachel's table -milk)
- Drop off or pick up.
- No sugar or salt (Give Vouchers instead for those specific foods)
- Farms for fresh fruit and veggies

Funding Sources:

- Greater Community Worcester Foundation for Grants

Volunteer Sources and Tracking

- Senior Employment Program (20 hrs)

Notes from Interview with the Boys and Girls Club of Worcester

June 10, 2021

The interview was conducted via phone call.

Food Supply and Storage Information:

- They have a household refrigerator (half freezer, half fridge with one door)
- Food supply through donations and they purchase the food themselves (don't use the WCFB because they do not have a lot that they could use due to their space)
- The BGCW have a large family and donor population, so they put out a wish list and individual staff members reach out to other people through social media and use coupons to obtain the food that they need.
- Additionally, families that they have helped in the past will give back often too (alumni, colleges, and companies also help them).
- They also use a lot of events like football games help them get their food.
- Her examples showed us that marketing is key when obtaining food donations from multiple sources.
- She proposed we could talk to incoming freshman at WPI to get food into the food pantry, along with club fundraisers – like competitions between clubs.
- She got standard metal shelves from Walmart. 5 shelves total, each shelf has four levels. Broke it down into canned goods, rice, cereal, home goods (tampons, shampoo, conditioner, etc. on the opposite side to avoid cross-contamination).
- Lowe's donated shelving after receiving a letter from the BGCW and they found free shelving through the Facebook Marketplace.

Staffing Questions:

- Only one person runs the food pantry since it is relatively small (the interviewee)
- Visits are done by appointment only – with checklist so they can get only once every six weeks due to the food pantry's size.

Advice for New Food Pantries that are Starting Up:

- Have a diverse selection of food (due to dietary restrictions, etc.)
- Offer stuff that can't be bought with food stamps – household items – cleaning supplies, shampoo, etc.

- Try to give them stuff that they can use to put a meal together with (pasta with marinara sauce, milk, and cereal).

Food Pantry Images will be sent to me via text message.

Notes from Interview with Southern Worcester Neighborhood Center
June 10, 2021

The interview was conducted in-person at the food pantry's address.

Observation 1: They are one of the food pantries run by Friendly House (another one of our interviewees).

Observation 2: We might be able to request food from them if they have a surplus of allergen-free food, produce, or multicultural foods.

Food Supply and Storage Information:

- They are using prepacked boxes due to the pandemic, but people would be able to come in a choose food in other circumstances.
- Fridges were bought online. However, they were hard to fix when they broke.
- One of the most purchased brands within the SWNC is the Avantco brand (they are mostly stainless-steel fridges).
- Due to space requirements and cleanliness, they recommend double-door, stainless-steel fridges.
- Although they have cardboard shelves, they recommend metal shelves because they are easier to clean and more resistant (the cardboard shelves cave in when there is too much weight on them).
- They said it is very important to keep things off the floors of the food pantry for cleanliness purposes and to avoid animals and insects getting to them.
- Furthermore, they said that keeping things separate on the shelves is challenging when there is a greater amount of food entering the food pantry.

Staffing Questions:

- There were six people working at the food pantry during the interview (one person went out to Target in Millbury, MA, to pick up food).
- Their volunteers usually come from and are paid by the Catholic Charities.
- They became much busier due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Components within the SWNC's Prepacked Boxes:

- Fresh bread
- Two cans of tuna

- Two cans of chicken
- Pasta
- Tomato Sauce
- Four Table Talk Pies
- Peanut Butter
- Rice
- Potatoes
- Mac & Cheese.

Notes from Interview with Rachel's Table

June 11, 2021

What they do:

- Pick up donated food and distribute it to other pantries.
- Milk for kids.
- Buys produce (for the Summer Kids Feeding Program).

Stores:

- Stop N Shop – going to send its donations to the Worcester County Food Bank.
- Whole Foods – Very generous in donation.
- Most Larger stores are giving out their maximum number of donations.
- Clark University offers a lot of donations.
- Reach out to local restaurants instead.
- M&M market on Lincoln St.
- June St. – 7/11
- Honey Farms
- Panera Bread gives donations on a first come, first served.
- Table Talk.
- Churches have food drives.

Put us on the map:

- Social Media.
- Knock on doors.
- Make calls.
- Website.
- Word of mouth (Talk to churches).

Volunteers:

- More volunteers at first – Find ideal operating hours.
- 1 evening or weekend period open every week for people that are working.

Grants:

- Greater Worcester Community Fund – Call and sit down with them.

People:

Contact Michael Newark – Rachel’s Table

Notes from Interview with the Dean of Students

June 18, 2021

Introductions

Dean of Students

- Interested in the food security of students.
- One day hopes to have students use the Thrive Food Pantry.
- Talk about ID2050.

Chartwell

- That is easier during the school year.
- The Dean has already talked to them, but the logistics of transportation is still an issue.
 - o Possible solution: volunteer pickup.
- Chartwell is based in WPI.
- Sit down with CHARTWELL HEAD (contact information was disclosed with us).

Information on Other Universities

- WPI has good connections with WSU.

Becker: Parts of their used infrastructure could be bought or donated!!!

- The Dean told us to contact ML.

Potential Programs for Thrive that involve WPI and its students

- The Dean wants to build a work study program component within Thrive.
- Participate in the Student Activities fair.
- Maybe conduct a WPI food drive.
- WPI Students can volunteer at Thrive.
- Food drives for Tie Die Shirts.

Other Local Resources or Connections

- Find other local food drives.
- Greek Life organizations also run food drives.

Notes from Interview with Director of Student Activities

June 21, 2021

Introductions

Greek life

- Write an email draft to send to all the Greek housing.
- Local partnerships allow Food drives, Volunteers, Money donations (fundraisers).
- She will send names of some Greek life that might be interested.
- They can help promote internal alias's email.
- She recommended us to reach out to these organizations, since they could help us with donations:
 - APL
 - ODK
 - Order of Omega.

Spread the Word about the Food Pantry

- No known way.
- Create events on social media.
- WPI social media repost.
- WPI Community service newsletter (we could have a corner in the paper)

Volunteers:

- Financial Aid for work study (Federal work study)
- Will email Financial Aid.

The United Way

- They are creating a program for college students to get involved in community service.

Other Suggestions

- Two community service days (first weekend of schools) or in April (applications are wanted by July 15 and August 1).

Notes from Interview with the Director of Chartwell

June 22, 2021

This interview was conducted via Zoom.

- Background on the Thrive Food Pantry project
- QCC isn't supplied by Chartwell
- Partnership with Chartwell
 - Acquiring food donations that can be refrigerated and stored at the food pantry
 - Chartwell (at WPI) donates to the Worcester Shelter
 - Chartwell has a food recruitment network (they are looking for close places that they can give food too. In some cases, a lot of food).
- Chartwell wants to meet at Thrive's site.
 - Additional overflow along the walls of the pantry
 - The food pantry will be split into a club area and a food pantry
 - 36' by 18' is the storage space we have for our food pantry
- Chartwell assists the Worcester County Food Bank and Rachel's Table
- Chartwell usually donates raw ingredients significantly during the Christmas season.
 - Raw ingredients are mostly what we're looking for
 - Refrigeration is ideal for preserving prepared food
 - They donate when they can't utilize the food themselves.
- Becker College is closing. Can we get their refrigeration and shelving units?
 - Chartwell separated from Becker, and they moved their company-equipment from Becker.
 - Frank Villarick (VP of Student Affairs) discussed with them to see what they own. They have a lot of stuff they can get.
 - The VP's last day is in a few days. He doesn't know if they're still going to be working, but he believes we could buy and acquire their shelving.
 - The Director is going to send us the emails of some of the contacts that he worked with when closing Becker.
 - The Director is also emailing Frank for us regarding this matter.

- He asked about our other food donations and we informed him of all our efforts with partnerships
 - He told us about Quinsigamond Village Community (food pantry that he found during Christmas) – very well-functioning food pantry that sends out and receives food.
 - The more we have a sustainable inventory, the more people will continue attending the Food Pantry.
 - Chartwell also sources for Rachel’s table (good for small amounts of items) and Friendly House.
 - He will talk with us when the food pantry is opening.