APPLYING AN INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE LENS

A Section from the Nutrition in Food Banking Toolkit

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Client - Throughout this toolkit, client is used to reference people accessing food and other services from the charitable food system. Terms such as "neighbors" or "recipients" may also be used to reference the same population.

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To access the comprehensive Nutrition in Food Banking Toolkit, visit Hunger + Health. Questions can be directed to nutritionteam@feedingamerica.org.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Extensive research reveals food insecurity is a complex problem and does not exist in isolation - nor does it impact communities in the same ways. Low-income families are affected by multiple, overlapping issues like lack of affordable housing, social isolation, chronic or acute health problems, high medical costs, and low wages. Collectively, these issues are important social determinants of health, defined as the "conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning and quality-of-life outcomes and risks." Effective responses to food insecurity must address the overlapping challenges posed by social determinants of health, and to be successful, this work must be done in partnership across community groups, organizations and sectors.

The Feeding America network, made up of 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries and meal programs, works to get nourishing food—from farmers, manufacturers and retailers—to people in need. More specifically, Feeding America is focused on transforming the charitable food experience so all people facing hunger can lead healthy, active lives. As food banks develop and refine strategic plans, data collection and analysis, and nutrition guidance, education, and policies serve as significant tools for achieving transformation within the sector and in actualizing desired outcomes. Throughout this strategic process, cultural competency-building and engaging stakeholders (e.g., people experiencing food insecurity, pantry staff, donors, etc.) is imperative.

Each of these tools, as well as others, are part of this Nutrition in Food Banking Toolkit, developed by Feeding America and the Nutritious Food Revisioning Task Force; Healthy Eating Research; MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger; CDC's Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network; Partnership for a Healthier America; UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity; University of California Nutrition Policy Institute; and Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. These organizations, specifically the individuals on page 5, came together to share organizational expertise and research on nutrition efforts in food bank and pantry settings. Their goal is to help the charitable food sector continue to enhance systems and programmatic efforts geared at understanding and meeting nutrition needs of neighbors experiencing food insecurity.

Each toolkit section is available as a standalone resource, as well as part of the combined toolkit found on Hunger + Health. Should you have any questions pertaining to the overall toolkit, contact nutritionteam@feedingamerica.org. Contacts of individual contributors can be found within the sections themselves.

To food banks and hunger-relief advocates utilizing this toolkit:
Thank you for your dedication to engaging communities and other partners in creating a more just and equitable country for all.

PARTNERS

GLEANERS

PARTNERS

Nutritious Food Revisioning Task Force

Task Force Co-Chairs

Jessica Hager, AM
Director, Healthcare Partnerships and Nutrition
Feeding America

Katie Martin, PhD
Executive Director
Foodshare Institute for Hunger Research & Solutions

Task Force Members

Adeana T. Osika, MHA, RD, LD/N
Health and Nutrition Program Director
All Faiths Food Bank

Brandon Bartley
Manager of Food Sourcing and Food Policy
Hoosier Hills Food Bank

Courtney Kennedy, MS Ed
Nutrition and Education Manager
Good Shepherd Food Bank

Danice Tatosian, CDN
Senior Manager of Nutrition & Public Health Initiatives
Feeding Westchester

Gayle Carlson
Chief Executive Officer
Montanta Food Bank Network

Jennifer Marier
Director, Product Sourcing
Feeding America

Jeremy Arnold
Programs Specialist
Feeding America

Jesse Baldwin
Chief Information Officer
Roadrunner Food Bank

John Nieman
Produce Cooperative Engagement Manager
Gleaners Food Bank

Joshua Wilcox
Manager Strategic Initiatives
Foodlink, Inc.

Junior Martinez
Analytics Specialist
Feeding America

Katy Anderson
Community Initiatives Manager
Roadrunner Food Bank

Laura Held, MS
Nutrition Resource Manager
Foodlink, Inc.

Michelle Hesse, PhD, RD
Consultant
Blue Ridge Area Food Bank

Stephanie Zidek
Director, Data and Analytics
Feeding America

Stephanie Berno, MS, RD, LD
Nutrition Education Manager
Houston Food Bank

Valerie Nicholson-Watson
President and CEO
Harvesters—The Community Food Network

Authors and Reviewers

Liz Baldridge
Managing Director, Manufacturing Food Industry Partnerships
Feeding America

Elizabeth Campbell, MA, RDN
Senior Director of Legislative and Government Affairs
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Eric Meredith
Consultant
Feeding America

Tony Pupillo
Managing Director, Retail Food Industry Partnerships
Feeding America

Hilary Seligman, MD
Professor of Medicine
University of California, San Francisco and Nutrition and CDC's Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN)

Karen Webb, PhD, MPH
Senior Epidemiologist/Researcher- Emeritus
University of California, Nutrition Policy Institute

Laura Vollmer, MPH, RD
Nutrition, Family & Consumer Sciences Advisor University of California Cooperative Extension
University of California, Nutrition Policy Institute

Marla Feldman
Senior Program Director
MAZON | A Jewish Response to Hunger

Marlene B. Schwartz, PhD
Director & Professor
Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity;
Department of Human Development and Family Sciences;
University of Connecticut

Megan Lott, MPH, RDN
Deputy Director
Healthy Eating Research

Paula Reichel, MPA
Senior Vice President, Strategic Initiatives & Senior Advisor
Partnership for a Healthier America

Ronli Levi, MPH, RD
Research Analyst
Center for Vulnerable Populations, University of California, San Francisco

Sarah Kinney, MPA
Director, Healthy Hunger Relief
Partnership for a Healthier America

Healthy Eating Research

HEALTHY EATING RESEARCH (HER) NUTRITION GUIDELINES FOR THE CHARITABLE FOOD SYSTEM

Expert Panel Co-Chairs

Hilary Seligman, MD, MAS
Professor of Medicine and of Epidemiology and Biostatistics
Director, Food Policy, Health and Hunger Program, Center for Vulnerable Populations
University of California, San Francisco

Marlene Schwartz, PhD
Director, Rudd Center for Obesity & Food Policy
Professor, Human Development and Family Sciences
University of Connecticut

Expert Panel Conveners

Mary Story, PhD, RD
Director, Healthy Eating Research
Professor, Global Health and Family Medicine and Community Health
Duke Global Health Institute
Duke University

Megan Lott, MPH, RDN
Deputy Director, Healthy Eating Research
Duke Global Health Institute
Duke University

Federal food programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) are the first line of defense against food insecurity in the United States. However, these benefits are often not sufficient to meet all of the food needs of people living in food insecure households. The charitable food system—a network of food banks, food pantries, and meal programs—fills this gap by distributing billions of pounds of food annually. In 2019, Healthy Eating Research convened a panel of experts in the charitable food system, nutrition, and food policy fields to create clear, specific recommendations for evidence-based nutrition guidelines tailored to the unique needs and capacity of the charitable food system. The intent of these recommendations is to improve the quality of foods in food banks and pantries in order to increase access to and promote healthier food choices across the charitable food system, allowing all people in the United States—regardless of income—access to the foods necessary for an active, healthy life.

Utilize the links below to learn more about the HER Nutrition Guidelines and access supplementary materials:

- HER Nutrition Guidelines Expert Panel Report
- HER Nutrition Guidelines Overview
- Materials in Spanish available here and here.
- Food Bank FAQ
- Yammer Board (Feeding America members only)

Nutrition Guidelines for Ranking Charitable Food

Healthy Eating Research

Source: Schwartz M, Levi R, Lott M, Arm K, Seligman H. Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System. Durham, NC: Healthy Eating Research; 2020. Available at https://healthyeatingresearch.org.

Food Category*	Example Products	Choose Often			Choose Sometimes			Choose Rarely		
		Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugars**	Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugars**	Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugars**
Fruits and Vegetables	Fresh, canned, frozen, and dried fruits and vegetables, frozen broccoli with cheese sauce, apple sauce, tomato sauce, 100% juice, 100% fruit popsicle	≤2 g	≤230 mg	0 g	All 100% juice and plain dried fruit			≥2.5 g***	≥480 mg	≥12 g
					≥2.5 g***	231-479 mg	1-11 g			
Grains	Bread, rice, pasta, grains with seasoning mixes	First ingredient must be whole grain AND meet following thresholds:			≥2.5 g***	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥2.5 g***	≥480 mg	≥12 g
		≤2 g	≤230 mg	≤6 g						
Protein	Animal (beef, pork, poultry, sausage, deli meats, hot dogs, eggs) and plant proteins (nuts, seeds, veggie burgers, soy, beans, peanut butter)	≤2 g	≤230 mg	≤6 g	2.5-4.5 g	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥5 g	≥480 mg	≥12 g
Dairy	Milk, cheese, yogurt	≤3 g	≤230 mg	0 g	3.5-6 g	231-479 mg	1-11 g	≥6.5 g	≥480 mg	≥12 g
Non-Dairy Alternatives	All plant-based milks, yogurts and cheeses	≤2 g	≤230 mg	≤6 g	≥2.5 g	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥2.5 g	≥480 mg	≥12 g
Beverages	Water, soda, coffee, tea, sports drinks, non-100% juice products	0 g	0 mg	0 g	0 g	1-140 mg	1-11 g	≥1 g	≥141 mg	≥12 g
Mixed Dishes	Frozen meals, soups, stews, macaroni and cheese	≤3 g	≤480 mg	≤6 g	3.5-6 g	481-599 mg	7-11 g	≥6.5 g	≥600 mg	≥12 g
Processed and Packaged Snacks	Chips (including potato, corn, and other vegetable chips), crackers, granola and other bars, popcorn	None			If a grain is the first ingredient, it must be a whole grain AND meet following thresholds:			≥2.5 g	≥141 mg	≥7 g
					0-2 g	0-140 mg	0-6 g			
Desserts	Ice cream, frozen yogurt, chocolate, cookies, cakes, pastries, snack cakes, baked goods, cake mixes	None			None			All desserts		
Condiments and Cooking Staples	Spices, oil, butter, plant-based spreads, flour, salad dressing, jarred sauces (except tomato sauce), seasoning, salt, sugar	Not ranked								
Miscellaneous Products	Nutritional supplements, baby food	Not ranked								

* Definitions of food product categories are included in the text of the full report.

**Use the added sugars value when available on the Nutrition Facts Label. If it is not available, use the total sugars value. The thresholds are the same for all categories except fruits and vegetables and dairy. For both fruits and vegetables and dairy, the thresholds for total sugar are ≤12 grams for the "choose often" tier, 13 to 23 grams for the "choose sometimes tier," and ≥24 grams for the "choose rarely" tier.

*** The threshold for saturated fat is the same for the "choose sometimes" and "choose rarely" categories. All saturated fat values ≥2.5 grams should be ranked as "choose sometimes." The overall ranking is based on the lowest tier of any nutrient. Thus, a grain with 3 grams of saturated fat ("choose sometimes"), 300 milligrams of sodium ("choose sometimes"), and 13 grams of added sugars ("choose rarely") would fall into the "choose rarely" tier, while a grain with 3 grams of saturated fat ("choose sometimes"), 300 milligrams of sodium ("choose sometimes"), and 10 grams of added sugars ("choose sometimes") would fall into the "choose sometimes" tier.

Notes: Tiers can be communicated as "choose often," "choose sometimes," and "choose rarely," or with green, yellow, and red visual cues, according to local preference. Overall food product rankings are determined by the lowest tier of any nutrient. For example, a product that is ranked green ("choose often") for saturated fat, yellow ("choose

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. population is changing and communities today are more racially, ethnically and culturally diverse. By 2030, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that 40% of the country's population will describe themselves as members of racial and ethnic groups other than non-Hispanic White.[1]

Given the current and projected demographic changes in the United States, the food bank network must take the nation's increasingly diverse backgrounds into account when developing nutrition policies, soliciting donations from partners and providing client choice.

The Applying an Intercultural Competence Lens section of the Nutrition in Food Banking Toolkit is intended to provide guidance on how to embrace equity, diversity and inclusion as standards of doing business internally and externally with the food bank network. These standards can be achieved by promoting respect and understanding, valuing and appreciating human difference, and upholding the experience of equity and social justice in all the food bank network's policies and interactions.

Intercultural competence is a continuous process that requires research, reflection, dialogue, and action. To determine the needs of a community, food banks should gather information from advisory groups and individual community members regarding cultural heritage, desired foods and existing or emerging assets. For staff, there needs to be organization-sponsored intercultural competence training opportunities as well as individual research and reflection. Organizations should not only provide training for staff, but they should also strive to look like the communities they serve and involve stakeholders in the planning, implementation and evaluation of their programs early in the development process.

This section of the toolkit provides a brief overview of how to build intercultural competence at the organizational, partner and individual levels. Truly achieving intercultural competence will take leadership commitment, planning, training, and community engagement.

At the end of this section, you will be provided with tools to help you develop an organizational intercultural competence and staff training plan.

Intercultural competence is:

A process, not a goal; a way of "being"

A standard of doing business

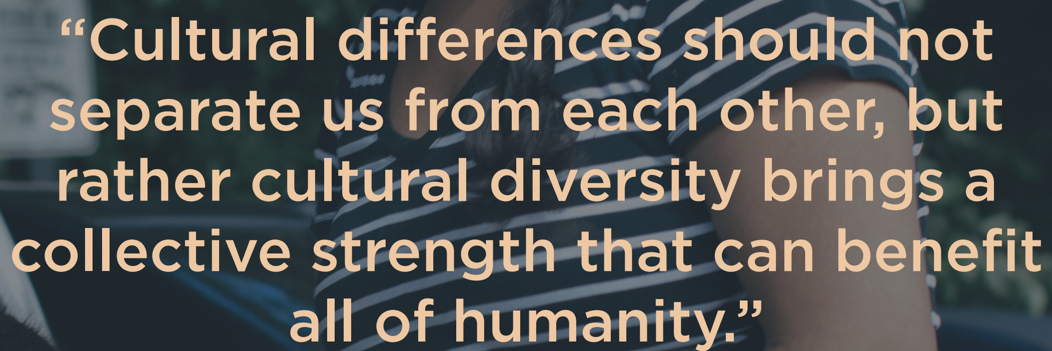
A way of improving service delivery

A way of expanding capacity to work with partners, communities and individuals

A tool to improve decision-making

A holistic lens used by the food bank network to look at the impact on people served

1 U.S. Census Bureau. (2015, March). Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p25-1143.pdf



- Robert Alan Aurthur

Leading Writer and Producer

WHAT IS CULTURE AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE?

All people are cultural beings. Culture includes language, values, customs, rituals, oral and written history, art, music, dance, and food. Every person has a cultural history that shapes who they are, how they learn, their points of view, what they think, family traditions, and the foods they eat. Knowing the cultural food needs and choices of communities served is essential to ensuring all people are treated with dignity and helps to minimize food waste. To ensure the needs of communities and people represented by various identities and histories are being met, it is important that food banks and partner agencies work toward intercultural competence and operationalize equity, diversity, and inclusion best practices.

Intercultural competence is defined in many ways, but it is important to highlight that intercultural competence is a process that is adaptable and evolves over time. At an individual level, intercultural competence refers to how well people understand and interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. For organizations to achieve intercultural competence, they must adopt a set of behaviors, attitudes and policies that enable them to work effectively-internally and externally-with the people they serve.

Intercultural competence is essential for fostering positive interactions and creating nonjudgmental, inclusive environments. A person who has intercultural competence seeks to understand cultures different from their own, but also is in tune with their own culture and inherent biases. Since everyone has cultural biases, it is important to recognize that developing an awareness of these biases is the first step in building the requisite knowledge and skills to find common ground with different cultures. Biases can also negatively influence nonverbal communication and these unchallenged biases could be detrimental to the overall choice pantry atmosphere and experience.

Building intercultural competence in organizations means changing how people think about other cultures, how they communicate and how they operate. It means that the structure, leadership, and activities of an organization must reflect the many values, perspectives, styles, and priorities of the people they serve. Changing how an organization looks is only the first step. Organizations that have intercultural competence emphasize the advantages of cultural diversity and inclusion, celebrate the contributions of each culture, encourage the positive outcomes of interacting with many cultures, and support the sharing of power among people from different cultures. To really change, an organization must commit to equitable programming, community-based evaluation and the creation of a place that is inclusive of all cultures and celebrates diversity.

COMMONLY USED TERMS WHEN DISCUSSING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Throughout this section, several terms related to intercultural competence will be used.

Cultural Appropriateness

The delivery of programs and services so that they are consistent with the communication styles, meaning systems and social networks of the people served and other stakeholders.

Cultural Awareness

A major element of cultural competence as defined by the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC). It is the first and foundational element because without it, it is virtually impossible to acquire the attitudes, skills and knowledge that are essential to intercultural competence. According to Winkelman (2005), cultural awareness includes recognition of one's own cultural influences upon values, beliefs and judgments, as well as the influences derived from one's work culture. [1]

1 Winkelman, M. (2005). Cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competence. Eddie Bowers Pub.

Cultural Bias

Interpreting and judging phenomena by standards inherent to one's own culture. The phenomenon is sometimes considered a problem central to social and human sciences, such as economics, psychology, anthropology, and sociology.

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence, also known as cultural competence, is a range of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills that lead to effective and appropriate communication with people of other cultures. Intercultural or cross-cultural education are terms used for the training to achieve cultural competence.
Cultural Humility – A process of reflection and lifelong inquiry, involves self-awareness of personal and cultural biases as well as awareness and sensitivity to significant cultural issues of others. Core to the process of cultural humility is one's deliberate reflection of their values and biases.

Cultural Relevance

The extent to which ethnic/ cultural characteristics, experiences, norms, values, behavioral patterns, and beliefs of a particular population as well as relevant historical, environmental, and social forces are incorporated in the design, delivery and evaluation of targeted materials and programs.

Cultural Sensitivity

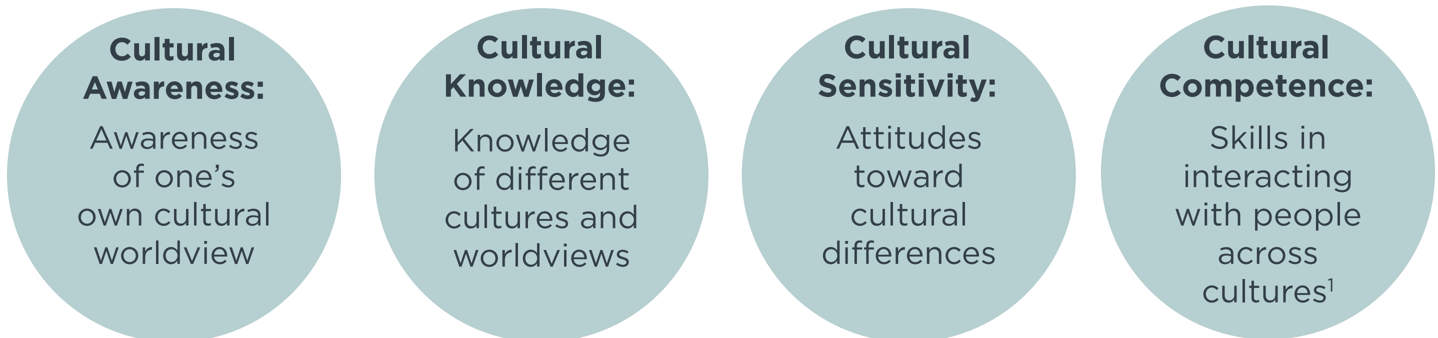
A set of skills that enables us to learn about and understand people who are different from ourselves, thereby becoming better able to serve them within their own communities.

Cultural Tailoring

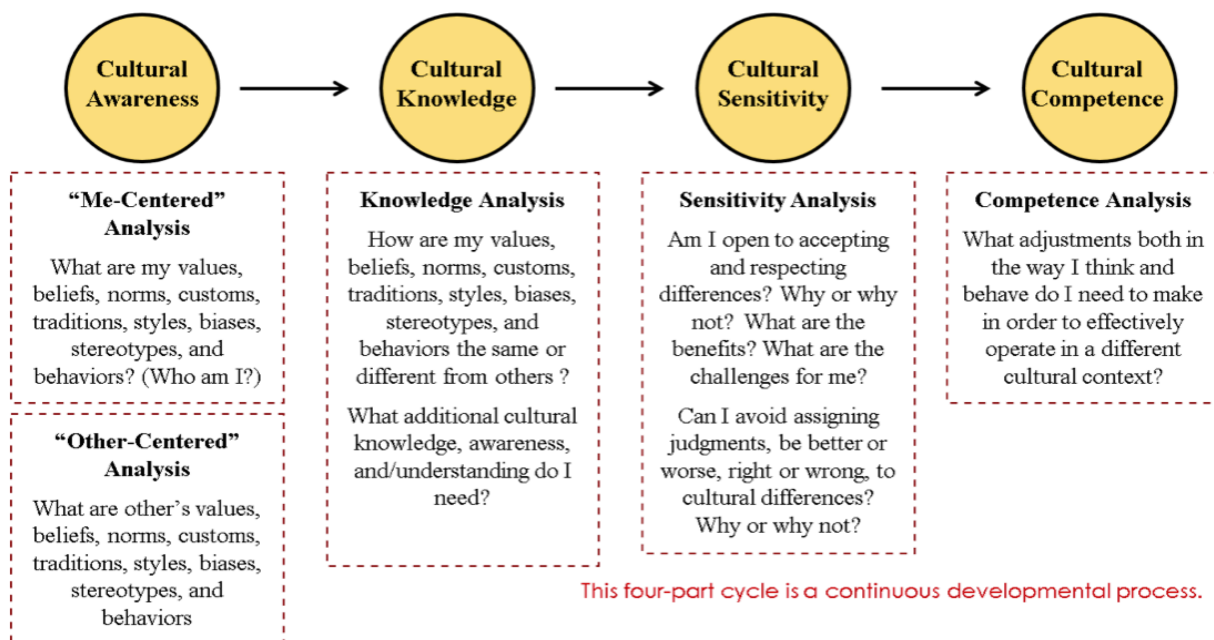
The process of creating culturally relevant interventions, often involving the adaptation of existing materials and programs for racial/ethnic subpopulations.[1]

1 Pasick, R. J., D'onofrio, C. N., & Otero-Sabogal, R. (1996). Similarities and differences across cultures: Questions to inform a third generation for health promotion research. Health Education Quarterly, 23(1_suppl), 142-161

Cultural competency has four components:



Intercultural competence is never an endpoint. It is a continual development process that involves an ongoing critical examination of one's attitudes, awareness, knowledge, and skills to negotiate cross-cultural differences to provide culturally-tailored service and create positive choice pantry environments.



1 Source: The Winters Group. (2013, November 4). Cultural Competency Model [Infographic]. Http://www.Theinclusionsolution.Me. http://www.theinclusionsolution.me/what-is-inclusion-part-2-inclusion-starts-with-i/

WHY IS INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IMPORTANT?

Compared to the general U.S. population, the population served by the charitable food sector reflects higher proportions of individuals who are Black, Hispanic or multiracial and lower rates of people who are white or Asian.

In situations where the staff and volunteers providing direct food assistance are predominantly white and recipients come from more racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, an imbalanced power dynamic can take hold between food providers and recipients. This creates the need for the food bank network to reflect upon their hiring and recruiting practices and work more closely with local organizations to address the cultural needs of the populations they serve.

Many historically white-led organizations find that their policies and programs fail to resonate with individuals who are Black, Indigenous and other people of color. As a result, food spaces are shaped by a set of white cultural practices that can inhibit the participation of people of color in alternative food systems and can constrain the ability of those systems to meaningfully address inequality.[1]

According to the Duke World Food Policy Center, problems may occur when organizations do not trust or listen to the people they aim to serve and ignore their ability and power to self-determine solutions for themselves. This narrative is a result of paternalism, in which the organization coming into the community assumes they know better than community members and thus prescribes solutions for them. It also reflects universalism, assuming communities, such as Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color, are monolithic and that they would want best practice solutions determined by predominantly white institutions with predominantly white cultural framing.

1 Conrad, A. (2000, September). Identifying and Countering White Supremacy Culture in Food Systems. Duke World Food Policy Center. https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/reports/identifying-and-countering-white-supremacy-culture-food-systems

A lack of equity, diversity and inclusion standards can lead to cultural incompetence and distrust from the communities the charitable food sector serves. This distrust may be the result of inequitable power dynamics, with organizations leaving Black, Indigenous and other people of color out of conversations on food movements, policy creation and decision-making. Because many organizations lack the representation of specifically Black, Indigenous and other communities of color where the food system's work occurs, it is imperative to engage representative individuals and communities to help create optimal client choice environments.

As charitable food programs seek to increase their intercultural competence and develop effective community engagement strategies, they should ask the following questions:

1. Who sits in positions of power and leadership at your organization or at other food organizations?
2. How many Black, Indigenous and other people of color are in these positions?
3. If you do not currently have a diverse organizational staff makeup, are you recruiting diverse individuals to join the advisory board and/or working with equity, diversity and inclusion experts?
4. How many people from the community are you seeking to help with the co-creation of policy?
5. Are you enlisting a diverse set of donors and partners to address community and client needs?

INTEGRATING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE INTO FOOD BANKS, PANTRIES AND PROGRAMS

Assessing Cultural Competence

This first step in the journey to achieving intercultural competence is becoming aware of your individual and organizational strengths and weaknesses. To gauge your current level of intercultural competence, many experts suggest conducting an assessment.

There are numerous assessment tools available for evaluating intercultural competence in organizational settings. Though more work is needed in developing empirically supported instruments to measure intercultural competence, there are several assessment tools that can provide guidance in identifying areas for improvement of intercultural competence.

Under Resources and Tools of this section, there are links to staff self-assessment instruments, guidelines for evaluating organizational intercultural competence, and forms addressing client satisfaction and feedback about culturally responsive services.

Applying Racial Equity to Anti-Hunger Policy

Perhaps you have a racially diverse staff, but the decision-making process is not racially equitable. Think about how internal decision-making processes could shift to become more racially inclusive and equitable. Organizations need to reach a point where people of each racial and ethnic group affected by the policy or program are equitably engaged in decision-making.

When it comes to developing nutrition programs and policies, consult with a diverse set of individuals served through the food bank and pantry network, and start consultation from the very beginning of the ideation or design phase. By engaging community members - and other organizations representing different groups of community members - the food bank and pantry can develop a better understanding of how to frame the narrative and learn about research and other resources you may otherwise have overlooked.

Key questions to consider as you develop policy:

Who are the true decision-makers regarding this project?

Were project leads identified in a process that is racially equitable?

Do experts of color hold real decision-making power or are they merely consulted for feedback?

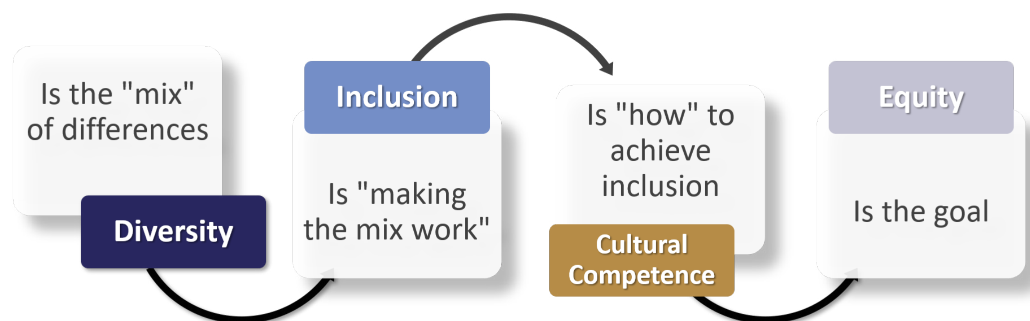
Are we inviting conversations and comments from current and former participants of color in the programs?

Are we unconsciously valuing formal research or other standard data sources over the perspectives and recommendations from people of color who have lived experience with topic areas and programs?

DEVELOPING AN INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE PLAN

The Winters Group

Food banks and network pantries should develop an intercultural competence plan to ensure that the people served are receiving services delivered in a culturally sensitive manner. It is recommended that the plan be comprehensive and incorporate staff, partners and individuals served. Feeding America recognizes that respecting the diversity of individuals and community experiences has a positive impact on food security outcomes. The recommended approach incorporates previously mentioned equity, diversity and inclusion standards.



Source: The Winters Group. (2019). Our Approach [Infograph]. https://www.wintersgroup.com/about/

Components of Intercultural Competence Plan:

- A community needs assessment: Analyze the demographic characteristics of the service population and identify current community assets that can be leveraged.
- An organizational capability assessment: Assess your organization’s capability to provide culturally appropriate services and access for diverse populations.
- Compare the community needs assessment to the organization’s capability, then develop a plan to address the organization’s deficiencies.

Recommended Best Practices:

- Develop trust with the community through open dialogue about shared goals and desired outcomes.
- Involve individuals served and the community in designing and implementing intercultural competence plans.
- Establish advisory councils comprised of individuals served, partners and non-client community members or enhance diversity of existing council members.
- Recruit diverse staff and improve retention of existing employees belonging to diverse groups.
- Include culturally-specific curriculum in staff training, focusing on cross-cultural communication, and view intercultural competence as an ongoing learning process.
- Contract with culturally-specific providers for assessment and training.
- Use culturally-informed consultants to confer with professionals who are not skilled in or knowledgeable of a community group's culture.
- Cultivate the use of diverse professionals from the community and/or non-professionals with lived experience.
- Use cultural practices that have proven effectiveness for specific populations.
- Use culturally-trained staff for education, client advocacy and community liaison efforts.

Organizational-Level Integration

An individual professional cannot achieve intercultural competence alone. It requires organizational commitment. Management helps create the structure and environment where intercultural competence is possible. Specifically, organizations within food banking may consider examining their hiring processes to ensure they are proactively recruiting and hiring individuals who are demographically representative of the people they serve to address the gaps between clients, staff, and other partnerships. Such changes have the potential to contribute to clients being able to regularly access food pantries and other distribution sites through a more inclusive experience.

In organizations where hiring practices and internal culture do not yet reflect racially-inclusive demographics, think about how the overall culture could shift to become more inclusive and equitable. Support and obtain professional development and training for staff on diversity and intercultural competence. Share articles and other materials that will help in this effort. Do not assume that supervisors are knowledgeable about the behaviors, attitudes and skill sets necessary to work effectively with or across different populations. They may also need training. Lastly, consider cross-training with an organization that can teach you about a specific culture.

Partner-Level Integration

One of the ways to reach a range of populations is working with community partners. A strength of food banks is extending their reach beyond the walls of their own organization, and this norm can be used to support intercultural competency efforts as well. Equitable engagement involves community partners from the beginning and empowers them to drive the conversation at each stage, which includes planning, design, implementation, and evaluation.

Create a diverse advisory board comprised of members who are most impacted by the programs. These members should be identified at the outset of planning and as projects develop. This should result in regular gatherings of key stakeholders, including experts in academic research and individuals with lived experience. The advisory board should play a key role throughout all stages of any project.

Partner-level best practices:

- Promote a dialogue between recipients and providers about prioritizing what foods are most needed and the feasibility of obtaining these items.
- Use community knowledge of local resources to engage previously unknown existing cultural food providers in donation of traditional foods.
- Promote sharing of recipes that blend available products and traditional cooking practices and flavors.
- Seek and build relationships with culturally diverse local farmers, retailers and food producers who can donate or sell their products to the charitable food sector.

Partners can bring expertise in working with the groups you want to better serve. For instance, they may have knowledge of health and nutrition beliefs and practices, and preferred sources of information and distribution channels.

In general, organizations that make ideal partners are ones that have been in the community for some time, and hold strong ties and trust within specific community groups. Selecting appropriate partners is important as it improves the likelihood that there will be shared vision, as well as desire and appreciation for ensuring intercultural competence and success.

Individual-Level Integration

When working with people different from yourself, it is important to put your own personal biases aside. Keep an open mind and do not jump to conclusions. Because a person speaks in a particular way does not mean they are not proficient in a particular language. Take time to learn about the person you are speaking with, which demonstrates respect and an understanding of intercultural competence.

Ultimately, individuals served by the food bank and/or pantry should have a voice in decision-making as their health and well-being are directly impacted by the upstream characteristics of the food banking system. This includes the expansion of research and advocacy partnerships. Participatory action research and citizen-science approaches should be promoted as viable strategies for enhancing client representation, inclusion, empowerment, and self-sufficiency in the context of designing, implementing and evaluating programs.

Examples of client-level intercultural competence:

- Providing cooking demonstrations using a variety of traditional flavors or dishes to increase community knowledge about how to use pantry ingredients.
- Providing simple recipe booklets that offer multiple recipes that use the same culturally appropriate ingredients.
- Using terms alternative to “culturally appropriate foods” when marketing to foreign-born or tribal populations such as “traditional cultural foods.”
- Providing resources and supports in the preferred language of clients and at accessible reading levels for a wide range of readers - including children.
- Consulting with members of the population you wish to better serve to develop culturally appropriate nutrition education.

Marketing and nutrition education materials are culturally competent when they:

- Show respect for the cultural values, beliefs and practices of the intended audiences both in content and graphics.
- Contain straightforward messages and are free from idioms, clichés and colloquialisms that the intended audience may not be familiar with.
- Convey the intended concept in a manner that is meaningful to the desired audience.
- Use pictures of persons that reflect the community you are trying to reach.
- Depict activities that the target group is familiar with and enjoys.

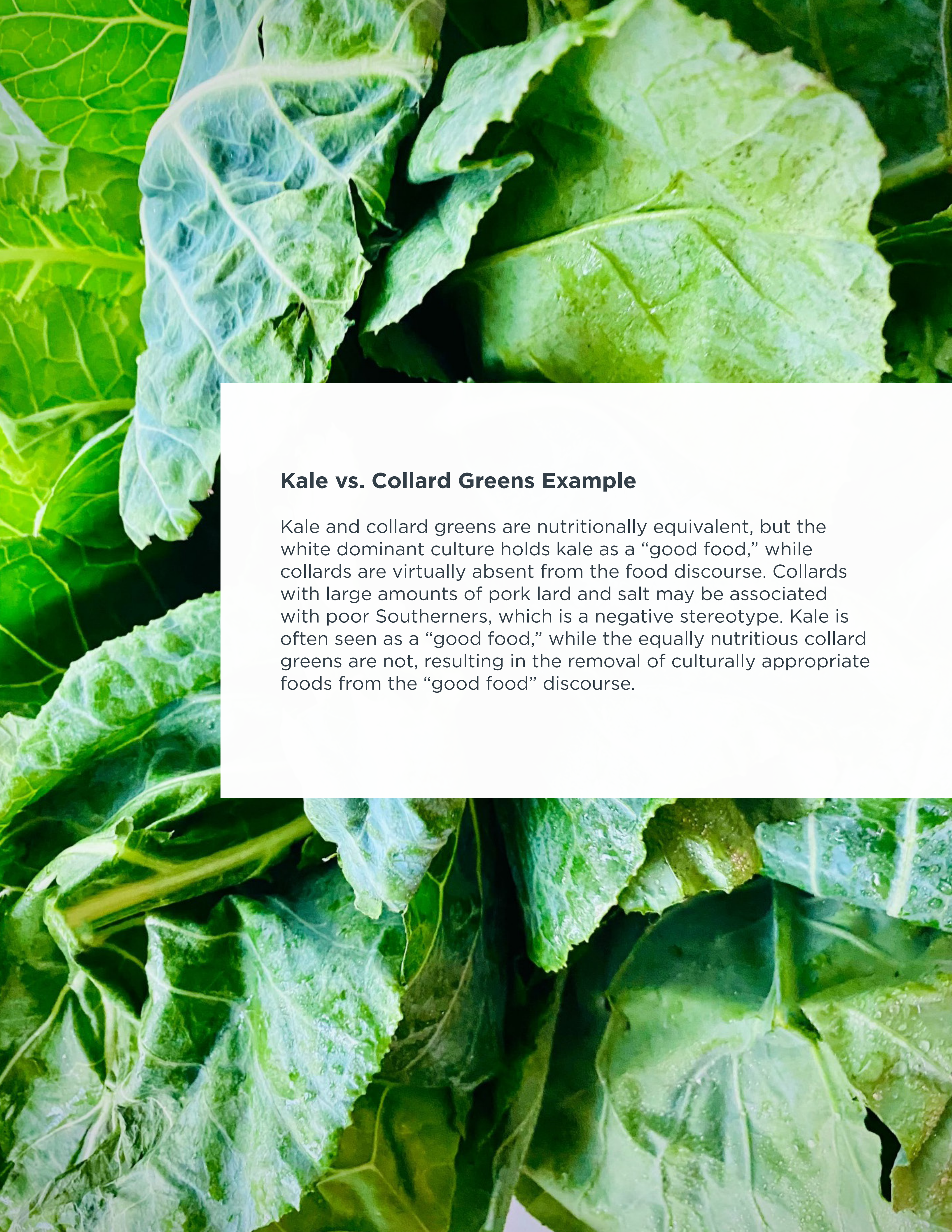
IMPLEMENTING THE HEALTHY EATING RESEARCH (HER) NUTRITION GUIDELINES WITH AN INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY LENS

In the Whiteness Food Movements Research Brief, the authors found in many cases that white dominant culture often determines nutrition guidelines and what foods may be deemed good or bad. This type of thinking ignores the cultural significance of certain foods or insinuates that some foods are bad because of cultural or racial associations. The idea of calling some foods good or bad is rooted in universalism, in which white dominant culture serves as the basis of "universal" ideals regarding what foods are "good" or "bad" for a healthy diet. This universalism means culturally appropriate foods from traditional diets are less likely to be perceived as "healthy" or categorized as healthy in nutrition policies. By attributing universal ideals about what is good or bad food, the whitened cultural ideal of good food erases the cultural histories of other traditions and eating habits. Furthermore, whiteness glosses over the historical context and racism related to changing eating patterns, ignoring how colonialism and industrialism stripped away indigenous farming practices and foods and violently pushed communities of color away from farming and agriculture by forcing them off their land.

HER Nutrition Guidelines - In 2019, Healthy Eating Research, a program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, convened a panel of experts in the charitable food system, nutrition, and food policy fields to create clear, specific recommendations for evidence-based nutrition guidelines tailored to the unique needs and capacity of the charitable food system. Learn More

The HER Nutrition Guidelines aim to ultimately support pantry clients in accessing healthy, culturally appropriate foods. Since many communities are disproportionately affected by consuming diets that are high in sodium, added sugars and fats, science-based dietary guidelines are needed to counter the health disparities caused by poor diets. Dietary guidelines are especially important because 26.2 percent of Black Americans and 16.8 percent of Hispanic Americans are food insecure and rely on Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs. These nutrition programs are mandated to follow science-based dietary guidelines, which promote a variety of nutrient-dense foods such as fruits and vegetables, wholes grains, lean protein, and healthy fats. When implementing any nutrition guidelines, it is important to also build in flexibility to support and acknowledge the diverse food choices and cultural heritage of the people you serve.

To incorporate the cultural food preferences of various individuals and families that may be served by food banks, engaging diverse community partners on the nutrition policy committee or conducting surveys that allow feedback on preferred foods can help promote inclusion. In every culture, there are nutrient-dense cultural foods and beverages that meet most nutrition guidelines. For example, traditional spices and herbs can help flavor foods while reducing added sugars, saturated fat and sodium. Relying on the expertise of elders, culturally-trained nutritionists, and specific cultural foodways can help individuals and families prepare foods healthfully while retaining heritage.



Kale vs. Collard Greens Example

Kale and collard greens are nutritionally equivalent, but the white dominant culture holds kale as a “good food,” while collards are virtually absent from the food discourse. Collards with large amounts of pork lard and salt may be associated with poor Southerners, which is a negative stereotype. Kale is often seen as a “good food,” while the equally nutritious collard greens are not, resulting in the removal of culturally appropriate foods from the “good food” discourse.

EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN FOOD BANKING

In a compilation of best practices among Washington state food providers, the Asian Counseling and Referral Service was noted for being particularly successful in its approach to providing culturally appropriate foods such as tofu, soy milk, ramen, fish, and rice. While these are not common products in the donation stream, the provider tried to purchase them specifically. Additionally, bilingual staff, who covered over 30 languages and who were representative of the community, provided this agency with an extra advantage to increase community engagement and accessibility. The agency also has adopted a client-choice model to decrease the foods thrown away and better the experience of food assistance (Washington Food Coalition, 2012).

Similarly, the Lifelong AIDS Alliance provided outreach to the East African community by developing a special-foods bag that included staples of the traditional diet such as injera (flatbread) along with fruits, vegetables and proteins. The special-foods bag was a success due to the partnership with a local Ethiopian grocery store which helped identify and donate the culturally specific foods. Success has spread through the community via word of mouth (Washington Food Coalition, 2012).

Further recommendations from the report title Culturally Appropriate Food Access in Montgomery County included:

- Develop positive relationships with grocery chains and large corporate chains to donate goods (Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina, Charlotte NC).
- Have food banks partner closely with food pantries to increase community engagement and cultural competency. Local community members may be pathways to future donors (Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina, Raleigh, NC).
- Engage with the community by facilitating culinary training programs and community kitchens, promoting food access, nutrition and shared skills (Inter-Faith Food Shuttle, Raleigh, NC).
- Offer cooking demonstrations to engage the community and make food more accessible to recipients from different cultures (Maryland Food Bank, Baltimore, MD). [1]

1 Montgomery County Food Council, Booth, L., Bridger, C., Gangemi, K., Patel, A., Sprague, M., & Twohey-Jacobs, L. (2018, April). Culturally Appropriate Food Access in Montgomery County: Gap Analysis and Action Plan Report. American University Capstone Team. https://mocofoodcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Capstone_Final.pdf

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Organizational Assessment

Organization Cultural Competency Assessment

The Protocol for Culturally Responsive Organizations is designed to assist organizations with the assessment of their practice and commitment to integrating cultural responsiveness across policies, practices, culture, data collection, and evaluation mechanisms.

This protocol was created to assist organizations to improve their ability to serve communities of color. It covers the full arena of an organization's governance and operations, integrating nine different domains, a set of 99 standards to establish the ideals for your work and a set of 109 pieces of evidence that support an organization to assert its capacity to serve communities of color. This evidence will allow an organization to respond to the question, "Where's the equity in your organization?" and you'll be able to say, "Here it is." You'll be able to go further than that, being able to say, "Here's our protocol assessment, improvement plan and details that show how far we've gotten in our efforts to be culturally responsive."

Enhancing Cultural Competence

This resource from the Community Tool Box assists organizations with the following:

- Defining your organization or community's vision for intercultural competence
- Creating goals for intercultural competence at the individual, organizational, program, and community levels
- Conducting a cultural audit of your organization and community
- Identifying goals for enhancing the intercultural competence of your organization based on the cultural audit
- Building culturally inclusive communities

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Assessment

The Michigan Nonprofit Association provides a fee-based assessment service to help nonprofit organizations assess their current status and future progress on the journey to make equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) values a reality. The Michigan Nonprofit Association provides three levels of engagement:

LEVEL 1

Individual Assessment: Allows an individual to determine their perceptions of your organization's commitment and progress with EDI best practices.

LEVEL 2

Organizational Assessment: Involves an organization's board of directors and/or staff to determine their perceptions of your organization's commitment and progress with EDI best practices.

LEVEL 3

Custom Review with EDI consultant: Interprets results of your organizational assessment, discusses specific organizational challenges and recommends next steps.

Multicultural Organization Development Stage Model

The Multicultural Organizational Development (MCOD) is a process of change that supports moving from a monocultural or exclusive organization to a multicultural or inclusive, diverse, and equitable organization. This approach requires an assessment of where the organization is and a commitment of where it wants to be in the future. From an analysis of the gap between where the organization is and where it wants to be, specific interventions are designed to accomplish the identified change goals.

Racial Equity Assessment Tool

This tool helps organizations assess their need for and capacity to incorporate a racial equity lens into the planning, decision-making and overall management of its work and the organization itself. This tool should help organizations identify organizational need and capacity, gauge and gain organization buy-in, analyze current programs and policies, and plan and integrate racial equity.

Individual Assessment

Cultural Competence Individual Assessment
This self-assessment tool is designed to help individuals consider their awareness, knowledge and skills in their interactions with others. Its goal is to assist in recognizing what each person can do to become more effective in working and living in a diverse environment.

Nutrition Education

Developing Culturally Sensitive Nutrition Education
The Developing & Assessing Nutrition Education Handouts checklist was created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation as part of the Future of Food project. The tool screens existing nutrition education handouts to establish the inclusion/exclusion of important quality components and can also be used to develop new nutrition education handouts.

EDI Statements

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statements
In January 2017, the Oregon Food Bank Board developed a statement of Equity Commitment, which is published on their website.

Cultural Competency Training

Voices for Food: Pantry Toolkit
This includes three cultural competency activities to help food pantry staff, volunteers, clients, and food council members feel more comfortable interacting with each other.

Building Culturally Competent Organizations
This is a resource provided by the Community Tool Box to help organizations answer four main questions:

1. What is a culturally competent organization?
2. Why is it important to be culturally competent?
3. When does an organization need to become culturally competent?
4. How do you create a culturally competent organization?

Equity Institute
During the training, participants will explore foundational concepts of culture, identity and systemic inequities. They will contextualize them both historically and within current social and cultural norms. They will then explore the application of equity and inclusion practices, and intersectional ally work at individual, social and organizational settings. Participants will discuss, share and practice examples of ally work, including an exploration of application and implementation of equity at the organizational/institutional level using Oregon Food Bank, food banking and food justice as case studies.

Conclusion

Everyone has a cultural history that shapes who they are, how they learn, what they think, family traditions, and the foods they eat. Knowing the cultural preferences of the charitable food program's member population is essential to ensuring all the people we serve are treated with dignity.

This section of the toolkit provided a brief overview of how to develop cultural competence at the organizational, partner and individual levels. Truly achieving intercultural competence will take leadership commitment, planning, training, and community engagement.

Remember, intercultural competence is never an endpoint. It is a continual development process that involves an ongoing critical examination of both individual and organizational attitudes, awareness, knowledge, and skills to negotiate cross-cultural differences and provide culturally tailored service—creating positive choice pantry environments.

Toolkit Glossary

Term	Definition
Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)	In recent years, this term has been used more frequently as an alternative to the phrase "people of color". In this toolkit, we use BIPOC to highlight the distinct experiences and histories of Black and Indigenous peoples and their relationships to whiteness in the context of the United States. These histories and relationships have shaped the experiences of white supremacy by all people of color and are a root cause of the disproportionate food insecurity and health disparities seen in Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color.
Citizen Science Approach	Citizen science can be described as a process in which communities and individuals are involved in designing a research question and performing scientific experiments with minimum involvement of professional scientists.
Client	Throughout this toolkit, client is used to reference people accessing food and other services from the charitable food system. Terms such as "neighbors" or "recipients" may also be used to reference the same population in other contexts.
Cultural Appropriateness	The delivery of programs and services so that they are consistent with the communication styles, meaning systems, and social networks of clients and other stakeholders.
Cultural Awareness	A major element of cultural competence as defined by the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC). It is the first and foundational element because without it, it is virtually impossible to acquire the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that are essential to cultural competence. According to Winkelman (2005), cultural awareness includes recognition of one's own cultural influences upon values, beliefs, and judgments, as well as the influences derived from one's work culture.
Cultural Bias	Interpreting and judging phenomena by standards inherent to one's own culture. The phenomenon is sometimes considered a problem central to social and human sciences, such as economics, psychology, anthropology, and sociology.
Cultural Competence	The ability to meet the needs of clients from different cultures in a way that everyone feels valued. It is an understanding and appreciation of the values, norms, and traditions within different cultures.

Cultural Humility	A process of reflection and lifelong inquiry, involves self-awareness of personal and cultural biases as well as awareness and sensitivity to significant cultural issues of others. Core to the process of cultural humility is one's deliberate reflection of her/his values and biases.
Cultural Relevance	The extent to which ethnic/cultural characteristics, experiences, norms, values, behavioral patterns, and beliefs of a particular population as well as relevant historical, environmental, and social forces are incorporated in the design, delivery, and evaluation of targeted materials and programs.
Cultural Sensitivity	A set of skills that enables us to learn about and understand people who are different from ourselves, thereby becoming better able to serve them within their own communities.
Cultural Tailoring	The process of creating culturally relevant interventions, often involving the adaptation of existing materials and programs for racial/ethnic subpopulations (Pasick et al., 1996).
Diversity	The range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)	TEFAP is a key public-private-charitable partnership. It helps the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), farmers, and food banks connect nutritious food with families facing hunger. TEFAP is the backbone of the charitable food system.
Equity	The fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.
Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System	In 2019, Healthy Eating Research, a program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, convened a panel of experts in the charitable food system, nutrition, and food policy fields to create clear, specific recommendations for evidence-based nutrition guidelines tailored to the unique needs and capacity of the charitable food system. The intent of these recommendations, formed and refined in partnership with the Feeding America network, is to improve the quality of foods in food banks and pantries in order to increase access to and promote healthier food choices across the charitable food system, allowing all people in the United States—regardless of income—access to the foods necessary for an active, healthy life. Learn more.

Inclusion	Inclusion is involvement and empowerment, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognized. An inclusive organization promotes and sustains a sense of belonging; it values and practices respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of its members.
Intercultural Competence	Intercultural competence, also known as cultural competence, is a range of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills that lead to effective and appropriate communication with people of other cultures. Intercultural or cross-cultural education are terms used for the training to achieve cultural competence.
Participatory Action Research (PAR)	Paternalism involves interfering in an individual's or community's ability or opportunity to choose and make decisions. It has the objective of improving welfare of individuals or communities and involves making decisions without the consent of the individuals or communities concerned. (Duke World Food Policy, 2020)
Paternalism	PAR seeks to understand and improve the world by changing it. At its heart is collective, self-reflective inquiry that researchers and participants undertake, so they can understand and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves. The reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture, and local context and embedded in social relationships. The process of PAR should be empowering and lead to people having increased control over their lives.
Universalism	Universalism assumes that values held by whites are normal and widely shared, meaning ideals are grounded in whitened cultural practices. Universalism results in a lack of resonance of these universal ideals and marginalization of those who do not conform to the ideals. Furthermore, it creates a narrative that the non-conforming must be educated on the ideals. (Duke World Food Policy, 2020)

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Feeding America is a nationwide network of food banks that feeds more than 40 million people through food pantries and meal programs in communities across America and leads the nation in the fight against hunger

161 North Clark Street
Suite 700
Chicago, Illinois 60601

1627 I Street NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20006

1.800.771.2303
www.feedingamerica.org
www.hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org

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