

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

FOOD INSECURITY IN CONTEXT

Attempts to address food insecurity have been a part of the U.S. landscape since the beginning of the 20th century. Soup kitchens and bread lines were initiated as temporary solutions to temporary economic recessions: “Contemporary food assistance programs can be dated to the late 1960s when hunger was ‘discovered’ in America.”¹ Since that time the number of food banks in the United States and other industrialized countries has grown exponentially. Food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens, once temporary solutions for addressing inadequate access to food, have become institutionalized in communities across the U.S. As funding for social safety nets declined beginning in the 1980s, responsibility for social welfare has increasingly fallen on the shoulders of community programs to fill the gaps.

Although food banks and other emergency food programs have stepped up efforts to address the food needs of an escalating number of individuals and families, efforts are challenged by high demand and funding constraints: One recent study by Feeding America estimates that food bank use is up 46% from 2006.² Feeding American President Vicki Escarra states, “Clearly, the economic recession, resulting in dramatically increasing unemployment nationwide, has driven unprecedented, sharp increases in the need for emergency food assistance and enrollment in federal nutrition programs.”³ Given this context, food programs like Missoula Food Bank must be ahead of the curve enough to adequately assess what lies ahead in the immediate future in terms of external pressures that may bear on program operations and how to address them. Conducting a program evaluation is one way to begin informing a necessary planning process to ensure continued access to food for people with limited resources.

PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM EVALUATION

In mid-October 2009, a small team composed of two program volunteers and three staff, including the executive director, began meeting to plan Missoula Food Bank’s program evaluation. The process was facilitated by Maxine Jacobson, PhD.

The purpose of MFB’s program evaluation was:

- To identify and incorporate the ideas, experiences and perspectives of clients, staff, board of directors, volunteers, donors, and community stakeholders into program development;

¹ Allen, P. (1999). Reweaving the food security safety net: Mediating entitlement and entrepreneurship. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 16, p. 118.

² See United Press International www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2010/02/02/Study-Food-bank-use-up

³ Ibid

- To use the evaluation results for program improvement, including client services and Missoula Food Bank’s relationship to and visibility in the community;
- To identify key program strengths and challenges, guide Missoula Food Bank’s mission statement, and facilitate strategic planning.

Evaluation team members worked collaboratively to develop the rationale, plan, and purpose of the evaluation. They completed a program description (logic model) to guide the development of key evaluation questions. They identified key program stakeholders, individuals with a vested interest in Missoula Food Bank’s success. Together the evaluation team designed data collection strategies and tools to gather relevant program information. Several staff members and volunteers helped enter data and assisted in data analysis. A consideration throughout the 7-month process was how to increase MFB’s capacity to incorporate program evaluation into its daily operations. Tools and procedures developed were designed with longevity in mind.

Another important consideration was how to make the program evaluation process as participatory as possible and how to align the evaluation strategy with an ethic of respect and appreciation common to other MFB practices. Participatory approaches to evaluation enlist the direct involvement of key program stakeholders in shaping the evaluation plan, developing evaluation questions, and deciding on the processes to gather information. The evaluator works as a collaborator and facilitator, a guide who can add expertise as needed.⁴ The participatory process will be described in more detail in *Chapter 3: Program Evaluation Design and Methods*.

BRIEF HISTORY AND PROGRAM DESCRIPTION⁵

Missoula Food Bank (MFB) was started in the fall of 1982 by a group of community residents whose main theme was “neighbors helping neighbors.” They called themselves “People Ending Hunger.” MFB was incorporated by the end of its first year. Donated food was distributed from the Mental Health Center located at Fort Missoula. The process was simple. People in need of food left a message at an answering service in the morning and then volunteers boxed the food and delivered it to people’s homes in the afternoon. One hundred food boxes were delivered during MFB’s first month of operation.

In February 1983, MFB moved to the old creamery building located at 401 West Railroad Street where it was open two days a week for a total of 12 hours. By this point in MFB’s history it had doubled the number of food boxes distributed monthly. By March 1983, food box distribution has doubled once again to 400 and within three years this figure had doubled again.

Throughout its early years MFB expanded its hours as needed and initiated strong partnerships with other Missoula non-profits and businesses to raise funds and collect food donations from the community. The first holiday food drive was launched in 1986 with the help of the Missoulian and

⁴ For additional information on participatory evaluation see Finn, J. & Jacobson, M. (2008). *Just Practice: A Social Justice Approach to Social Work Practice*. Peosta, IA: eddie bowers publishing (pp. 377-412).

⁵ Information for this section was provided by the Food Bank. It has been somewhat rearranged by the report’s author.

Stone Container Corporation. Over 42,925 pounds of food was distributed and \$4,000 in cash donations was collected. Holiday food drives have continued to the present.⁶ Other successful fund and food raisers and community awareness events included “Hands across Missoula” where 1,600 local residents held hands to connect the University of Montana to the Missoula County Courthouse in a show of community solidarity.

In its 28-year history, Missoula Food Bank has had only three executive directors. The first was Renee Giovarelli, who started her involvement with MFB in 1984 as a VISTA volunteer. She left four years later. Bill Carey was hired in 1988 and served as director for 10 years. In 1999, Cynthia Lotty took over as director when Bill Carey left to become one of Missoula’s County Commissioners.

MFB expansion over the last ten years has included the development of a number of essential programs that reach out to the community to address food security needs. Food Circle, developed in 1999, was one of the first food rescue programs in the United States; the Roots Program started in 2001, distributes commodities to low-income seniors; Kids Café (now Kids Table) also started in 2001 as a summer feeding program for children eligible for entitlement programs when school is in session but who are at risk for hunger during school breaks. Other significant additions included satellite distribution sites in 2003 which are now located in Potomac and Lolo.

In 2009, MFB had 908 volunteers who worked a total of 15,446 hours. The total number of different individual clients served was 16,140. Thirty-five percent of the total clients served were children under the age of 18. Forty percent of all households served have at least one family member who works.

Missoula Food Bank’s mission statement is as follows:

Missoula Food Bank responds to the emergency food needs of the hungry and works to reduce the incidence of hunger and its effects on individuals, families and the community.

Missoula Food Bank:

- 1. Offers immediate relief to those experiencing hunger by providing nutritious food.*
- 2. Educates and empowers individuals and families experiencing hunger to identify and alleviate the causes of hunger.*
- 3. Mobilizes resources to advocate for the hungry and to educate about hunger issues.*
- 4. Encourages community support and responsibility for Food Bank resources.*

⁶ For the holiday food drive in 2009, 61,837 pounds of food was donated and \$187,029 in financial contributions was collected.

Missoula Food Bank’s guiding principles are:

1. We believe in providing a respectful, confidentially, non-judgmental experience for those we serve. No request for help is ignored.
2. We believe in a pro-active approach to hunger issues and are opportunistic in increasing resources and building partnerships.
3. We believe that community awareness and understanding of hunger issues lead to on-going support and responsibility for their solutions. We facilitate rigorous discussion about hunger issues to develop a continuing relationship with the community.
4. We believe in fiscal responsibility and in using the Missoula Food Bank dollars in the most efficient and effective ways in support of the mission.

Missoula Food Bank strives to achieve its mission by distributing a three-day emergency supply of food to anyone who needs services. Over 3,000 people hungry or at-risk of hunger receive services monthly. Almost half of these individuals are children. MFB distributes food at its administrative headquarters located on Third Street in Missoula and also from its satellite distribution sites in Potomac and Lolo.

OVERVIEW OF REPORT

The primary intention of this report is to be a working document to promote dialogue and guide upcoming organizational strategic planning efforts scheduled for fall 2010.⁷ The report is divided into ten chapters including the *Introduction*. The *Missoula Food Bank Program Description* chapter discusses the process used to develop a program logic model to describe key components of MFB operations including resources, activities, and participants, and short, intermediate and long term impacts of MFB’s work. The *Program Evaluation Design and Methods* chapter describes how the evaluation was conducted and the rationale behind the participatory, mixed-methods approach adopted by the evaluation team. The next six sections address evaluation findings from key program stakeholder groups (clients, volunteers, staff, board of directors, donors, and community stakeholders). A summary of key findings from each program stakeholder group is included at the end of each of these chapters. Finally, the *Summary of Cross-Cutting Themes and Conclusions* chapter pulls out the dominant themes that emerged across groups and serves as a “show of strength” for particular ideas or concerns and program challenges. The conclusions are less about specific recommendations⁸ and more about thoughts sparked by the findings. Hopefully these can be helpful in launching the strategic planning effort.

⁷ This report is lengthy by design because of its main purpose as a strategic planning tool. It contains data analysis details not ordinarily including in a program evaluation report but important to program planning, marketing, and program development efforts.

⁸ Recommendations in a participatory program evaluation are generated by the evaluation team after review of the findings.

CHAPTER 2: MISSOULA FOOD BANK PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

LOGIC MODELS AS PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Logic models are tools that help focus an evaluation, assist program stakeholders in understanding different aspects of a program, and describe how it is suppose to work and its intended outcomes.⁹ The old saying, “if you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll probably end up somewhere else”¹⁰ rings true when considering organizations, their missions and their outcomes. A logic model, constructed collaboratively with key program stakeholders, provides a picture of how an organization or a program is suppose to function, what it is and what it is not, and it illustrates the relationship between resources, activities, and benefits. A logic model sets the foundation for a program evaluation by laying out assumptions about *why* the organization is suppose to work, what *resources* are needed to invest to make it work, the *activities* or products generated through the investment of resources, the short- and long-term changes expected as a result of the program and finally, the “down the road” or far reaching impacts or changes that occur as a result of the program’s implementation.

LOGIC MODEL PROCESS AND RESULTS

Logic models are best completed collaboratively with people who have a working knowledge of the organization. MFB’s evaluation team spent a three-hour session developing the logic model and then completed the final version by reviewing several drafts and making necessary changes. Table 2.1 illustrates Missoula Food Bank’s logic model:

Table 2.1: Missoula Food Bank Logic Model

Assumptions, Theories, and/or Principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Everyone should have access to nutritious food because food is a basic human right.▪ Food should be provided with dignity and respect.▪ Food safety is a priority in the distribution of emergency food.▪ People need to have healthy, nutritious food options.▪ Missoula Food Bank is a <u>supplemental</u> food program. It can not meet all the food needs of all nonprofit Missoula-area agencies.▪ The Missoula community knows hunger is an important issue and assumes responsibility to address it.▪ Hunger will most likely continue to be an issue in our community▪ Transportation is an access issue for people who need emergency food.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- MFB needs to be centrally located and close to transit.- Most people can get to MFB on their own but there are homebound people who can not.▪ Rescuing food in the community adds to food security, helps with recycling and reduces waste.

⁹ See Preskill, H. & Russ-eft, D. (2005). *Building Evaluation Capacity*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications pp. 75-85.

¹⁰ This saying has been attributed to Yogi Berra among others.

- Food insecurity/hunger need to be addressed on multiple levels, including policy, advocacy and education.

Inputs (Resources)

- Equipment including delivery trucks
- Facility (physical space)
- Community support
- Board of directors
- Diversified funding plan that includes both national and state sources
- Website including on-line donation functionality
- In-kind services (computer, public relations work)
- Individual financial donations (private and public)
- Food donations
- Time, talent, dedication, care and commitment of compassionate staff and volunteers
- A strong volunteer base
- Interns, practicum students
- Relationships with other agencies that bring in resources
- Use of volunteer vehicles for food donations
- Bus passes
- Generation of good will and enduring community spirit

Outputs – Activities (what we do)

- Food distribution through store (3-day supply)
- Food distribution to other agencies
- Provide Kids’ Table Program to feed children during the summer months
- Provide Food Circle Program to recover food from restaurants
- Commodities’ distribution through the Roots Program
- Provide volunteer opportunities and experience and the satisfaction of contributing
- Volunteer training and supervision
- Thanksgiving distribution
- Guidance to other organizations re: volunteer program; financial support/knowledge
- Provide clients with referral resources
- Provide information and education to increase community awareness about hunger and food insecurity
- Outreach for SNAP (food stamp program)
- Distribute a variety of donated food
- Recover and distribute prepared foods
- Transport food to low-income seniors
- Celebrate and recognize work of staff and volunteers
- Collaborate on community-wide projects that address food security issues
- Coordinate food drives
- Reimburse mileage for drivers who use own vehicle
- Supervision of internships, practicum students

Outputs – Participants (who we engage)

- Clients including low-income seniors and children
- Community including schools, faith-based organizations, private business, etc.
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Community agencies
- City, state, national political leaders

- Board of directors
- Donors (financial)
- Donors (food – individuals, restaurants, grocery stores, University)
- Students and interns

Outcomes – Short Term (1-2yrs.)

- Increased community awareness about hunger and food insecurity
- Increased food and financial contributions from individuals and community organizations
- Increased volunteer satisfaction and well being based on experience and contribution
- More food is rescued and not wasted
- Clients feel immediate relief from food inaccessibility-related anxiety
- Immediate access to nutritious food meals
- Increased volunteer recruitment

Outcomes – Intermediate Term (3-4 yrs.)

- Community educated about hunger and food insecurity as an issue that needs the full support of the community for solutions
- Community satisfaction with MFB achieving its mission
- Efficient use of and increased size of store/warehouse for distribution
- Better services to vulnerable populations (children, seniors, people with disabilities, etc.)
- Good reputation of the food bank as an important and well managed volunteer site
- State, regional, and national recognition of the MFB’s work including ability to attract funding

Long Term Impacts – (5-10 yrs.)

- Increased civic pride – this is Missoula and this is what we do
- More long term donors invested in good program delivery
- Healthy community – no community can be healthy when hunger is prevalent
- Healthier children with increased learning capacity
- Implementation of public policies related to addressing the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity (i.e., increasing minimum wage, creating better and higher paying jobs, health care reform, etc.)
- Decreased crime
- Increased food security

Logic models are planning, implementation and evaluation tools. They reflect group process and shared understanding. They are meant to change during and after an evaluation has been completed because they reflect program development.¹¹ Once program evaluation results have been reviewed, the logic model in Table 2.1 can help the organization’s strategic planners pinpoint areas in need of improvement and clarify the basic assumptions upon which MFB purports to operate. In this sense the logic model becomes a map of sorts and a touchstone yet flexible enough to adapt to changes that need to be made as new input adds to program development.

¹¹ The Kellogg Foundation’s *Logic Model Development Guide* is a helpful tool and can be accessed at www.sites.aces.edu.

CHAPTER 3: PROGRAM EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODS

EVALUATION DESIGN

The underlying philosophy of a participatory evaluation is that the more an organization's stakeholders are engaged in planning an evaluation and implementing its design, the greater the likelihood the evaluation results will be found useful and put to use.¹² While collaborative approaches to evaluation may take longer than traditional approaches, they involve educational and capacity building processes that are meaningful and productive for organizational learning in the long run.

As is the case with participatory approaches to evaluation, the program evaluation design was developed by the evaluation team. The team was composed of 2 volunteers, 2 staff members and MFB's executive director who met for five 3-hour work sessions over the course of 7 months. The team focused the evaluation's purpose, developed guiding questions, and contributed to the creation of tools and strategies for data collection.

Given the distinct program stakeholders involved in some capacity with MFB (i.e., as donors, volunteers, clients, staff, community partners, and the board of directors), the team decided to create a mixed-methods approach to gather evaluative information that fit best with particular groups. Decisions about fit were made based on time, effort, and cost. So for example, staff met for a facilitated discussion instead of completing a survey as did the board of directors. Other stakeholder groups were administered surveys.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Broad evaluation questions were articulated by the evaluation team to guide the development of data collection tools. These covered the following general topic areas:

1. What is MFB doing well that it should continue doing?
2. What areas of organizational operations could MFB improve on?
3. What are MFB's strengths in terms of community partnerships and what new opportunities exist for collaboration?
4. What do program stakeholders think about MFB's facility, its challenges and capacity for growth, and what suggestions or recommendations do they have for change?

From these general question areas, evaluation tools were developed addressing clients' and volunteers' satisfaction with different aspects of MFB's operation, staff perceptions about the best

¹² See Preskill, H. & Torres, R. (1999). *Evaluative Inquiry for Learning in Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

of MFB and changes that would enable increased success, and board of directors' perceptions about challenges facing MFB and building new partnerships.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

In total, 588 program stakeholders provided information about MFB through either small group discussion or by completing self-administered surveys. Two facilitated discussions were conducted in April 2010, one with 9 staff members including the executive director and a University of Montana MSW practicum student, and the other with 10 board members. Three board members who could not attend the discussion emailed their responses.

During March 2010, 466 clients completed a 1-page self-administered survey while waiting to shop at the Food Bank. Instructions included letting clients know that help was available if they needed assistance completing the survey and that their responses were confidential and would not in any way affect their ability to visit the Food Bank in the future. Sixty-four volunteers completed the survey either during or after their work shift in March 2010. One hundred surveys were mailed to donors who had contributed financially and/or through food contributions. Fifty community stakeholders were mailed surveys. Response rates for both surveys were 26%.¹³

There are advantages and disadvantages of any data collection method. Facilitated discussions and open-ended survey items typically provide more in-depth information than can be achieved by surveys or questionnaires alone.¹⁴ Facilitated discussions especially allow for collecting a large amount of information for relatively low cost in less time than administering surveys. They also provide an opportunity for participants to bounce their ideas off others which can result in new ideas and insights. On the downside, open ended responses need to be transcribed to be analyzed and then subjected to content analysis which is time consuming and requires the involvement of more than one person to ensure reliability of results.

Surveys, on the other hand, are fairly inexpensive and time efficient. Responses can be confidential thereby providing privacy and perhaps more candid results. Their downside is low response rates and the costs, specifically with mailed surveys, for postage to mail them and get them returned and for reminder cards.¹⁵

¹³ To save on costs, no stamped and addressed envelope was included in the mailed survey nor were potential respondents sent a reminder card about the survey deadline. These issues most likely account for the low response rates. In hindsight, conducting online surveys may have been the best approach to cut down on program evaluation costs and increase response rates.

¹⁴ See Russ-Eft, D. & Preskill, H. (2001). *Evaluation in organizations: A systematic approach to enhancing learning, performance, and change*. New York: Basic Books, pp.272-273.

¹⁵ Adler, E. & Clark, R. (1999). *How it's done: An invitation to social research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Given the mixed-methods data collection approach adopted for the evaluation, different strategies were used to make sense of the data. Google Docs was used to create data entry forms to make it easy for volunteers to help by entering survey data. Once survey data was entered and reviewed, the data was transferred to Excel for data analysis. While sophisticated (and expensive) data entry and analysis programs exist (SPSS, for example) most of these are cost prohibitive for nonprofit organizations. Creating a data management and analysis system using tools at hand is an inexpensive way to complete the process while simultaneously building an organization's evaluation capacity.¹⁶

Content analysis, a qualitative data analysis method, was used to analyze facilitated discussions and open-ended survey questions. It consists of coding and labeling significant themes that emerge in response to specific questions and counting the frequency of their occurrence to assess the intensity, strength, or importance of particular topics, opinions, perspectives or ideas.¹⁷ To begin the process, staff and board of directors' facilitated discussions were tape recorded and transcribed. Each was read several times in order to become familiar with the content. Then an open source data organizing program (WEFT) was used to sort text, create thematic categories and catalogue quotes to provide examples of dominant themes.

Several staff members and volunteers were enlisted to assist with the content analysis of open-ended survey items. All responses to open-ended items were copied separately so they could be reviewed easily. An educational sheet was created with a step-by-step process outlining how to conduct content analysis. The facilitator worked with one staff member on how to complete the process by hand so he could guide others.¹⁸ All staff and volunteer analyses were reviewed by the facilitator. Finally, themes were quantified by counting their occurrence within categories and then recorded to assess the strength of particular ideas or perspectives.

HOW FINDINGS ARE ORGANIZED IN EACH CHAPTER

Findings from surveys and facilitated discussions are organized according to (1) stakeholder groups, (2) quantitative and qualitative data analysis (in that order), and (3) key themes and their frequency rates. Quotes are used to illustrate, identify, or further explain key themes. Tables and charts are used to illustrate participants' responses to closed-ended survey items. Lists are used to elaborate on the thematic analysis of facilitated discussions and open-ended survey items. Each chapter ends with a summary of key findings.

¹⁶ Program evaluation in nonprofit organizations happens rarely and sometimes only because it is required by a funding source. Finding ways to make evaluation less costly and easier to perform encourages the use of evaluation as an invaluable program planning and management tool.

¹⁷ For additional information on content analysis see Neuman, W.L. (2004). *Basics of social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., pp. 219-222; Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory, procedures, and techniques*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, pp. 61-176.

¹⁸ Pete Morsch deserves a round of applause for his contributions to creating a system for data entry and analysis. Volunteer Pam Greer helped with data entry and analysis. Other staff members, Dorey, Mayo, and Nick and several volunteers including Alex, and Cathy, who were on the evaluation team, also went beyond the call of duty helping with the content analysis.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS – MISSOULA FOOD BANK CLIENTS

REVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Surveys that were incomplete or completed by first time visitors to the Food Bank were eliminated from the data set. A total of 466 surveys were used for the analyses. No demographic items were asked for several reasons: (1) to be less intrusive in clients' lives, (2) to ensure confidentiality of responses, and (3) because the analyses did not require going beyond frequencies and percentages. The evaluation team was especially aware of how many surveys clients are asked to complete and wanted to respect clients' right to privacy regarding sharing information about education level, yearly income, other services used and so on.

CLIENTS' SATISFACTION WITH MFB

Clients were asked to respond to 10 survey items addressing their satisfaction with various aspects of MFB services and operations. Table 4.1 represents the frequency and percentage rates of responses to each item. As noted in the table, almost 88% of clients were very satisfied with the treatment they received by the people who work at the Food Bank. Factoring in those clients who were somewhat satisfied with the treatment they received brings the total to almost 93% of clients being at least somewhat satisfied with the experience they encountered at MFB. The second highest percentage rate was for quality of services received which 83% of clients endorsed as being very satisfied. Again, almost 93% of clients who completed the survey were at least somewhat satisfied with the quality of the services they received.

Table 4.1: Client Survey – Satisfaction with Missoula Food Bank (N=466)

To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following:	Frequency	Percentage	
Treatment by people who work here	Very satisfied	408	87.55
	Somewhat satisfied	24	5.15
	Neutral	11	2.36
	Somewhat dissatisfied	2	0.43
	Very dissatisfied	3	0.64
	Not sure	0	0.00
	Missing	18	3.86
Quality of services	Very satisfied	387	83.05
	Somewhat satisfied	44	9.44
	Neutral	12	2.58
	Somewhat dissatisfied	1	0.21
	Very dissatisfied	3	0.64
	Not sure	0	0.00
	Missing	19	4.08

Shopping process	Very satisfied	334	71.67
	Somewhat satisfied	81	17.38
	Neutral	28	6.01
	Somewhat dissatisfied	6	1.29
	Very dissatisfied	4	0.86
	Not sure	0	0.00
	Missing	13	2.79
Location of Food Bank	Very satisfied	333	71.46
	Somewhat satisfied	76	16.31
	Neutral	37	7.94
	Somewhat dissatisfied	7	1.50
	Very dissatisfied	1	0.21
	Not sure	0	0.00
	Missing	12	2.58
Intake process	Very satisfied	327	70.17
	Somewhat satisfied	75	16.09
	Neutral	42	9.01
	Somewhat dissatisfied	8	1.72
	Very dissatisfied	4	0.86
	Not sure	0	0.00
	Missing	10	2.15
Signs and instructions	Very satisfied	319	68.45
	Somewhat satisfied	77	16.52
	Neutral	31	6.65
	Somewhat dissatisfied	10	2.15
	Very dissatisfied	3	0.64
	Not sure	0	0.00
	Missing	26	5.58
Store layout	Very satisfied	318	68.24
	Somewhat satisfied	86	18.45
	Neutral	25	5.36
	Somewhat dissatisfied	12	2.58
	Very dissatisfied	6	1.29
	Not sure	0	0.00
	Missing	19	4.08
Food quality	Very satisfied	282	60.52
	Somewhat satisfied	113	24.25
	Neutral	43	9.23
	Somewhat dissatisfied	11	2.36
	Very dissatisfied	2	0.43
	Not sure	0	0.00
	Missing	15	3.22
Food quantity	Very satisfied	263	56.44
	Somewhat satisfied	122	26.18
	Neutral	40	8.58

	Somewhat dissatisfied	23	4.94
	Very dissatisfied	3	0.64
	Not sure	0	0.00
	Missing	15	3.22
Variety of food selection	Very satisfied	251	53.86
	Somewhat satisfied	136	29.18
	Neutral	52	11.16
	Somewhat dissatisfied	12	2.58
	Very dissatisfied	3	0.64
	Not sure	0	0.00
	Missing	12	2.58

Overall, Table 4.1 illustrates that clients who completed the survey are, on the whole, at least somewhat satisfied (and mostly very satisfied) with MFB and various aspects of program operation. The items receiving the lowest percentage rates concerned the quality, quantity and variety of food, however, dissatisfaction levels combined across any item were never more than 5.58% which speaks highly for the services, the workers, and MFB operations.

CLIENTS’ “BEST THINGS” ABOUT MFB

Clients were asked to list what they believed were the three “best things” about Missoula Food Bank. Sixty-six percent of clients responded to this question so interpreting responses needs to be viewed in this light. In addition, not all clients listed three “best things.” List 4.1 below indicates main themes and subthemes that emerged from the content analysis of items, the total count for each main theme category (i.e., T=326, etc.), and the frequency count for each subtheme. Data from this question were aggregated to arrive at the ranking of best things as illustrated below.

List 4.1: Clients’ Best Things about MFB – Main Themes and Subthemes

- **Availability of food (129)** **T=326**

 - quality of food (55)
 - quantity of food (46)
 - food in general (41)
 - variety of food (41)
 - free food (9)
 - local food (3)
 - nutritious food (2)

- **Staff and volunteers (213)** **T=263**

 - treatment (38)
 - “feel good” environment (12)

- **Process and procedures (68)** **T=256**

 - hours (47)
 - help provided (43)
 - quality of services (29)
 - pick out own groceries (19)
 - number of visits allowed (10)

- access to nonfood items (10)
 - referrals and resources (6)
 - feeding the poor (6)
 - easy (5)
 - store layout (5)
 - dependable (4)
 - flexibility of special circumstances (2)
 - easy to get help (2)
- **Facility** **T=51**
 - location (40)
 - clean (11)
 - **Everything is good; keep it the same** **T=32**
 - **Miscellaneous** **T=21**

List 4.1 indicates that the top three best things according to clients were: (1) availability of food, (2) staff and volunteers, and (3) the process and procedures implemented by the Food Bank. As might be expected, clients who responded to this open-ended question were especially appreciative of the fact that emergency food is available to them. Quality, quantity and variety were the main subthemes that emerged in this category. Comments included, “Food for those in need on a REGULAR basis.” “I am pleased to get free produce.” “They are so good at networking to get fresh produce and salvaging from stores and bakeries.” Clients were happy with the amount of food they received and pleased with the selection: “The selection is great and covers the food groups.”

After food, clients’ next most reported “best thing” about MFB was the staff and volunteers. Adjectives used to describe how clients felt about the people who worked at the Food Bank varied but usually included some of the following descriptors: courteous, congenial, fair, kind, warm-hearted, friendly, helpful, cheerful, giving, awesome, good attitude, graciousness, nice, nonjudgmental, polite, encouraging, understanding, and respectful. The following composite of quotes reflects clients’ sentiments about their treatment at Missoula Food Bank:

I am most grateful for the extension of kindness, nutritional assistance, courtesy, and gracious and gentle understanding of circumstances and change that can come to individuals and people. . . I am not embarrassed to come here. . . I can ask any question over and over and don’t get treated stupid. . . To be treated like a human being with kindness. . . You save people’s souls and dignity.

Items addressing process and procedures formed a third category of “best things” about MFB according to clients who responded to this question. The most prevalent subthemes that emerged focused on Food Bank hours, the kind of help provided, and quality of services. Clients appreciated how often the Food Bank was open, both day time and evenings. They stressed the helpfulness of services and provisions that ranged from providing diapers to “helping people survive.”

The remaining themes included some comments about the accessibility of the Food Bank’s location, and the cleanliness of the facility. Besides some miscellaneous comments, some clients took the

opportunity to state how they wanted things to stay the same and “to keep up the good work.” A number of clients commented on how “everything” about the Food Bank was a best thing: “This is by far the best food bank I’ve ever been to.”

CLIENTS’ “THINGS TO IMPROVE” ABOUT MFB

Clients were asked to list what they thought were “things to improve” about Missoula Food Bank. Fewer clients responded to this question so interpreting responses needs to be viewed within this context. In addition, of those who responded, not everyone listed three recommendations for improvement. The bulleted list below indicates main themes and subthemes that emerged from the content analysis of the item, the total count for each main theme category (i.e., T=182, etc.), and the frequency count for each subthemes. All of the data from this question were aggregated to arrive at the ranking of best things as illustrated in List 4.2 below.

List 4.2: Clients’ Things to Improve about MFB – Main Themes and Subthemes

- **Food** **T=182**

 - more quantity of food (76)
 - more meat (22)
 - more produce (16)
 - better selection or variety of food (35)
 - different food choices (9)
 - better quality food (12)
 - expired food (12)

- **Process, procedures, and services** **T=136**

 - add or change hour or times to shop (54)
 - more times to shop in the store per month (18)
 - intake problems (4)
 - intakes takes too much time (16)
 - why paper work every time? (4)
 - miscellaneous complaints re: process (15)
 - too long a wait (14)
 - improved signage (11)

- **Facility (2)** **T=97**

 - need bigger facility (33)
 - more parking (25)
 - more locations (12)
 - bigger waiting area (9)
 - wider, bigger aisles (9)
 - cleaner (4)
 - more check out tables (1)
 - more shopping carts (1)
 - rug slippery when wet (1)

- **Everything is fine the way it is** **T=72**

- **Volunteers (8)** **T=19**

 - need more volunteers (9)
 - more volunteer opportunities (2)

- **Don't know or no comment** **T=15**
- **Miscellaneous** **T=13**
- **Additional services** **T= 7**
- **Transportation** **T= 3**

Fewer clients responded to this open-ended question than those who commented on “best things.” List 4.2 indicates that the top three themes according to clients were: (1) issues concerning food, (2) the process, procedures and services, and (3) limitations with the facility. Client who responded to this open-ended question were concerned about the quantity of food provided, especially what some considered the need for more produce and meat; the selection and variety of foods available; and food quality. The need to have more food available was the primary theme with the food category. One client explained:

We need better quality and quantity of food. We are 4 working people who can't get down here except 5-7 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday. Sucks. No milk or meats and very little selection when we are in need to feed children.

Other comments concerned specific types of food clients would like to have access to which ran the gamut from frozen foods to “more boxes of mac and cheese for families – it's a staple.” Clients suggested providing more food “when there is a larger household.”

The majority of clients who responded to this question about concerns regarding the process, procedures and/or services were most concerned about adding or changing the hours or times for Food Bank visits. Almost 40% of clients who responded to this question expressed the need to visit more often. Other responses about procedural issues addressed the need for a “more expeditious” intake process and “no interview after the first visit” or “having people's information on file” to cut down on what some saw as a “repetitious” intake process. Others commented on the ‘long waits’ and the need for “signs that are easier to follow.”

Facility limitations were addressed to a lesser degree but the most often repeated response was about the need for a larger facility: “Expand the building size. Sometimes the goods overflow into the cart area and it becomes confusing and congested.” Other comments related to facility size addressed the need for more space in the waiting area, to expand the aisles “to make it easier to shop,” and to add more locations.

Although not among the top three themes in this category, when considering the challenges or limitations mentioned above, it is important to note that 72 responses were from clients expressing the idea that “everything is fine the way it is.” The following composite of clients' comments summarizes the idea that one should not tinker with something that already works well:

Keep it just like it is. . .There's really nothing I'd change. . . Works great – no improvements needed. . .Keep up the good work. . .I really can't think of any inconvenience or difficulty that may need attention. . .I couldn't change anything else to make it better.

Other comments concerning “things to improve” addressed the need for more volunteers, additional services, and improved transportation to and from the Food Bank.

CLIENTS’ OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT MFB

The final question on the client survey asked respondents if they had any additional comments about MFB. The majority of responses in this category (68%) were from clients expressing their appreciation of the Food Bank:

I just want to say that you are all lifesavers. If it wasn't for the Food Bank, my family would have gone without or even worse off, for example, writing bad checks to get food in the end.

I am personally most thankful to the volunteers and their energy to help and radically improve another's basic needs. This is a valuable mental comfort as well to be sure. Thank you all very much.

The Food Bank is awesome. It has been there for me in times of need. The people here do an amazing job.

SUMMARY OF CLIENT SURVEY FINDINGS

When combined, closed-ended and open-ended survey items indicate considerable client satisfaction with Missoula Food Bank. One area of extreme strength according to clients is the respectful treatment they receive from staff and volunteers and the nonjudgmental atmosphere that made it easier to visit the Food Bank and ask for help. The fact that the Food Bank had food available, in general, was another strong point coupled with a policy “where no one is turned away.” Accessibility to food was increased by the number of hours the Food Bank was open and the range of services provided

While most clients were satisfied with food quality, quantity and the selections offered, some clients thought more food should be available, especially for larger families with children. Suggestions were made to increase store hours, provide more times to shop per month, and to change what some clients saw as a repetitive intake process. Facility concerns were expressed with most relating to the need for a larger facility and more parking for clients.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS – MISSOULA FOOD BANK VOLUNTEERS

REVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Volunteers self-administered the 2-page survey developed by the evaluation team containing both qualitative and quantitative items. In addition to questions about their satisfaction with MFB and its strengths and challenges, volunteers were asked about their motivation for volunteering at MFB, what keeps them volunteering, and any suggestions they might have for building new partnerships in the community that would benefit the Food Bank.

A total of 64 surveys were completed by MFB volunteers and used for analyses. Volunteers were asked what work activities they performed to determine if there were differences in responses based on work positions. However, many volunteers hold multiple positions so a comparison of satisfaction across work activities was not possible. Volunteers were not asked any identifying information other than this question to respect their right to privacy.

VOLUNTEERS' SATISFACTION WITH MFB

Volunteers were asked to respond to 8 survey items addressing their satisfaction with various aspects of MFB services and operations. Table 5.1 represents the frequency and percentage rates of responses to each item. As noted in the table, the items that struck the biggest cord with volunteers were the climate of team work among staff and volunteers and the support and guidance received in order to accomplish their assigned tasks. Ninety-two percent of volunteers who responded to the survey endorsed being very satisfied with this aspect of MFB. Eighty-six percent were very satisfied with the support and guidance they received.

Table 5.1: Volunteer Survey – Satisfaction with Missoula Food Bank (N=64)

To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following:	Frequency	Percentage
The climate of team work among paid staff and volunteers:		
Very satisfied	59	92.1
Somewhat satisfied	3	4.7
Neutral	0	0.0
Somewhat dissatisfied	1	1.6
Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
Not sure	1	1.6
Missing	0	0.0
The support and guidance needed to accomplish your volunteer activities:		
Very satisfied	55	86.0
Somewhat satisfied	8	12.4
Neutral	0	0.0
Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0.0
Very dissatisfied	0	0.0

	Not sure	1	1.6
	Missing	0	0.0
The convenience of the Food Bank location:	Very satisfied	52	81.3
	Somewhat satisfied	7	10.9
	Neutral	4	6.2
	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Not sure	1	1.6
	Missing	0	0.0
The training provided to do your volunteer work:	Very satisfied	51	79.7
	Somewhat satisfied	8	12.4
	Neutral	3	4.7
	Somewhat dissatisfied	1	1.6
	Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Not sure	0	0.0
	Missing	1	1.6
How clearly the expectations for your position are described:	Very satisfied	51	79.7
	Somewhat satisfied	8	12.4
	Neutral	3	4.7
	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Not sure	1	1.6
	Missing	1	1.6
How your skills and abilities have been matched with your volunteer work:	Very satisfied	50	78.1
	Somewhat satisfied	9	14.1
	Neutral	4	6.2
	Somewhat dissatisfied	1	1.6
	Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Not sure	0	0.0
	Missing	0	0.0
The number of volunteers at your station to accomplish the task:	Very satisfied	48	75.0
	Somewhat satisfied	12	18.6
	Neutral	2	3.2
	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Not sure	0	0.0
	Missing	2	3.2
The facility space in which you do your volunteer work:	Very satisfied	41	65.1
	Somewhat satisfied	16	25.3
	Neutral	2	3.2
	Somewhat dissatisfied	2	3.2
	Very dissatisfied	1	1.6
	Not sure	0	0.0
	Missing	2	1.6

In total, volunteers expressed very little dissatisfaction with various aspects of the Food Bank and their volunteer experiences. The item receiving the lowest percentage rate concerned whether volunteers were satisfied with the facility space in which they do their volunteer work. While this was the lowest rating, 65% of volunteers expressed being very satisfied with the facility with only 4.8% expressing some level of dissatisfaction.

MOTIVATION FOR VOLUNTEERING AT MISSOULA FOOD BANK

In order to gauge what brings volunteers to MFB and what motivates them to continuing donating their time, they were asked two open-ended survey questions addressing these topic areas. List 5.1 below indicates the main themes and subthemes that emerged in volunteers’ responses to the question, “What was your motivation for volunteering at Missoula Food Bank?” Ninety-seven percent of volunteers who completed the survey responded to this item. The most prevalent theme that emerged from responses addressed the broader aspects of volunteering specifically helping feed people who needed help and serving by “giving back to the community.” One volunteer wrote, “I wanted to help but I didn’t have enough money to donate.” The next most frequently occurring theme was primarily about personal reasons for volunteering (e.g., filling time, personal gratification, encouragement from others to volunteer). Another volunteer responded, “It’s a family tradition and I believe the Food Bank provides a very valuable service to the community.” Social aspects of volunteering also emerged on a lesser scale. Subthemes in this category related to relationship building and enjoying a sense of camaraderie: “The interaction among volunteers and clients sounded good. Being retired I needed to be with people.”

List 5.1: Volunteers’ Motivation for Volunteering at MFB – Main Themes and Subthemes

- **Broader aspects of volunteering** **T=42**
 - helping feed those in need (22)
 - serve community and give back (11)
 - helping address hunger (6)
 - helping the food bank (2)
 - food bank provides a valuable service (1)

- **Personal aspects of volunteering** **T=20**
 - personal gratification (8)
 - fill my time (6)
 - people encouraged me to volunteer (3)
 - something different than the rest of my life (1)
 - like volunteering (2)

- **Social aspects of volunteering** **T=9**
 - social meeting – working with the public (4)
 - FUN (2)
 - climate of the food bank (1)
 - working with the staff and other volunteers (1)
 - good volunteer position (1)

- **Miscellaneous** **T=5**

Only 4 volunteers did not respond to the next question about why they continue to volunteer at MFB. As noted in List 5.2 below, the most dominant theme that emerged from the data analysis related to the social aspects of volunteering. So for example, relationships that are developed through volunteer activities resonates the strongest for volunteers. A combination of “friendly staff and volunteers” and “a pervasive sense of helping others at MFB” captures most accurately volunteers’ motivation to continue donating their time at the Food Bank. Other comments are represented in the following composite:

The clients and the staff are wonderful people to work with. My fellow volunteers are personable, ever fascinating, and hard working. . . I enjoy my fellow volunteers, the staff and the clients! It is so much fun to be here and very rewarding to be part of the Food Bank. . .The work, the people, the ability to give back and to feel better about myself.

List 5.2: Volunteers’ Motivation to Continue Volunteering – Main Themes and Subthemes

- **Social aspects of volunteering** **T=39**
 - staff and volunteer relationships (23)
 - climate of the food bank (13)
 - well run organization (1)
 - social aspects of meeting people (2)

- **Personal aspects of volunteering** **T=19**
 - personal gratification (10)
 - FUN (4)
 - feeling appreciated and worthwhile (3)
 - enjoy the work (2)

- **Helping (9)** **T=18**
 - helping community (4)
 - doing something meaningful (4)
 - helping the food bank (1)

VOLUNTEERS’ “BEST THINGS” ABOUT VOLUNTEERING AT MFB

Volunteers were asked to list the 3 best things about volunteering at Missoula Food Bank. The analysis of this question was conducted by aggregating responses and then placing them in order of frequency from the highest to the lowest as illustrated in List 5.3 below. Out of 192 possible responses to this question, 31 were not completed, which is approximately 16% of the options available.¹⁹ The most frequently occurring theme dealt with social aspects of volunteering such as developing relationships with clients, staff, and other volunteers within the positive and affirming atmosphere of the Food Bank.

¹⁹ When coding responses to open-ended items one response may contain multiple themes so only frequencies are a valid statistic in this case.

List 5.3: Volunteers' Best Things about Volunteering – Main Themes and Subthemes

- **Social aspects of volunteering** **T=62**
 - developing relationships (46)
 - social aspects of meeting people (10)
 - climate of the food bank (6)

- **Helping and giving** **T=58**
 - helping those in need (24)
 - helping community (10)
 - helping in general (8)
 - helping food bank meet the needs (5)
 - giving back to the community (2)
 - giving (1)
 - filling a need (1)
 - making a difference or having an impact (1)
 - addressing poverty and hunger (1)

- **Personal gratification aspects of volunteering (15)** **T=42**
 - feeling valued and appreciated (15)
 - FUN (4)
 - staying busy (2)
 - like the work (2)
 - “It’s the right thing to do.” (1)
 - feel needed (1)
 - opportunities for personal growth (1)
 - learning (1)

- **Miscellaneous** **T=10**

List 5.3 also indicates that helping and giving back was the second strongest theme. As in response to earlier open-ended volunteer survey questions, the idea of helping and giving was about making a difference in the community by giving back and by helping those with unmet needs for food. Personal gratification was the third theme. Responses that fit in this category were about feeling needed, valued and appreciated, learning and growing from the volunteer experience, staying involved and “having FUN.”

VOLUNTEERS' CHANGES TO IMPROVE EXPERIENCE

The main theme that emerged when volunteers were asked what they would change to improve their volunteer experience related to random operational processes and procedures. For example, “more carts for shopping,” “more training opportunities,” “to keep the products in the same order each day with a certain amount of room for each,” and “a better way of keeping the screener, interviewer area warm in winter.”

List 5.4: Volunteers' Changes to Improve Experience – Main Themes and Subthemes

- **Process and procedures (22)** **T=34**
 - food issues (6)
 - more donations (1)
 - longer client hours (2)
 - more visits per month (1)
 - board volunteer interaction (1)
 - advertisements (1)

- **Facility issues (4)** **T=21**
 - more space (13)
 - cleaner (5)
 - more parking (2)
 - partnering with other agencies (1)

- **Volunteers (7)** **T=13**
 - more training (4)
 - pay volunteers (2)

- **Nothing major needed** **T=10**

- **Can't think of anything else** **T=4**

- **Don't know** **T=4**

Facility issues cropped up with some regularity. Volunteers suggested having a larger client waiting area, “more food storage, especially cold storage,” and they recommended more space in general to store food, maneuver for shopping, and additional shelving to hold food. Other facility issues according to volunteers consisted of several comments about parking, “cleaner floors,” and addressing facility space issues by “connecting with other agencies and combining locations and services.”

VOLUNTEERS' SUGGESTIONS FOR BUILDING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

As noted on List 5.5, nonfood related organizations was the main theme that emerged from asking volunteers, “What opportunities do you think exist for building new partnerships that would benefit clients, staff and/or volunteers?” They recommended more connections to churches, schools and school children, the Poverello, Missoula Downtown Association, the YMCA and homeWORD. The second theme encapsulated increasing partnerships with food-related organizations such as 1,000 New Gardens, “Michelle Obama’s program for reducing childhood obesity,” “more supermarkets to pick up food from,” and “partnerships with restaurants that offer healthy food.”

List 5.5: Volunteers' Suggestions for Building New Partnerships –Main Themes and Subthemes

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------|
| ▪ Nonfood related organizations | T=12 |
| ▪ Food related organizations | T=8 |
| ▪ More outreach | T=4 |
| ▪ Don't know | T=3 |
| ▪ Miscellaneous | T=3 |
| ▪ Cooking classes | T=1 |
| ▪ Too many partnerships not good | T=1 |
| ▪ Already good at partnerships | T=1 |

VOLUNTEERS' OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT MFB

Volunteers were asked a final question about whether they had any additional comments to make about Missoula Food Bank. Of those who responded, comments primarily consisted of praising the Food Bank for its work: The following is a composite of volunteer responses to this question:

I am happy to be a part of this great organization. It is growing and changing to meet Missoula's needs. . . I really love this place. I hope I don't sound like a chronic complainer. If nothing changes, it is still a great place. . . I think this is a wonderful organization. The Food Bank is well-run and an asset to our community. You do a great job! . . .MFB is a super good program. I hope that everything always goes great for this place. . . The paid staff seems like a good fit for this place. You do a great job hiring.

List 5.6: Volunteers' Other Comments about MFB – Main Themes and Subthemes

- | | |
|---|------|
| ▪ Accolades, affirmations and appreciation | T=24 |
| ▪ Suggestions | T=3 |
| - food (1) | |
| - need more room (1) | |
| - "be nice if we didn't need the food bank" (1) | |
| ▪ Nothing to add (2) | T=3 |
| - new volunteer with lots to learn (1) | |

SUMMARY OF VOLUNTEER SURVEY FINDINGS

Volunteers who completed the survey were most satisfied with the climate of acceptance and respect shown among staff and volunteers and the team effort that went into making their volunteer experience extremely positive. They felt supported in their work and were given the right amount of assistance to do justice to their assignments. What kept them coming back or solidified their commitment to the Food Bank had to do with “the greater good” they were achieving by contributing to an important and very necessary effort to address food needs of community members who were struggling to make ends meet. Doing this was personally gratifying and meaningful in assorted ways: Many saw volunteering as a way to “give back” to the community they felt had given them so much.

Volunteers expressed less satisfaction with the facility space primarily in terms of how space inadequacies affected clients’ ability to shop and the Food Bank’s ability to handle and store more food. They suggested increasing partnerships to include more children and schools and to expand relationships to include more organizations involved in community food system work. On the whole, volunteers were extremely satisfied with MFB.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS – MISSOULA FOOD BANK STAFF

REVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Staff findings were produced during a 1.5 hour facilitated discussion with 8 staff members and MFB's executive director. Participants were asked the following questions:

1. What most attracted you to work at MFB? What were your initial impressions that made you proud to be an employee of MFB?
2. What is it about MFB that you think has been especially successful?
3. What are the three things MFB does best that you would like to see continue in the future?
4. What are 3 things you would like to change that would enable MFB to continue to be successful and operate at its best?
5. If you could add, change, modify or refine MFB's mission statement to incorporate the best of MFB how would it read?
6. Are there any questions important to this process that might not have been asked?

In another 1-hour section of the facilitated discussion staff members were asked to map existing partnerships with local and nonlocal organizations and groups, to identify successful partnerships and to describe what makes them successful. They were also asked to identify potentially new partnerships or collaborative opportunities that would benefit MFB and the steps necessary to realize these partnerships. Findings for the partnership mapping exercise will be discussed later in this chapter.

WHAT MOST ATTRACTED YOU TO WORK AT MFB

As indicated in List 6.1, the most compelling theme in staff members' responses to the question about what most attracted them to work at MFB focused on organizational climate or what could be described as a culture of support, appreciation, respect, mutual commitment and engagement in the work. A deep sense of mutual support, feeling valued, appreciated and treated respectfully were themes that resonated among staff. The following quotes help identify how staff members understand their work environment and the culture in which it takes place:

With some of the other work I've done you don't always know how your good ideas are filtering down and how your intentions and your services are being executed and the needs you hope it will fill. Here you get to see that happen. It's tangible every single day, not only in the handling of food but also in the smiles and the hugs and the dialogue that happens around the food which is just as important. So those were the things I expected as part of this organization that I have found to be true and longer impressions of who we are and how we do our work – that keeps us bonded in the work and in the service. It certainly makes the hard days of trying to make sense of the circumstances we are seeing...makes those days a little bit better, knowing we are doing it all together.

What was most successful for me is the engagement of the volunteers and the staff and the mission and the fact that we adhere to it. I am always afraid the bureaucracy will encroach and sustaining the agency will become more important than its original mission but that has never happened here.

Other themes that emerged in response to this question addressed what staff perceived as a “well organized and well run program” with a solid reputation and “a lot of community support.” Addressing food insecurity through direct encounters with people in need was also a major draw to work at the Food Bank and this linked to being a part of the Missoula community where addressing food security was embraced.

List 6.1: What most attracted you to work at MFB? What were your initial impressions that made you proud to be an employee of MFB?

- **Organizational climate of support, appreciation, respect, engagement** **T=13**

 - support from supervisors, staff (4)
 - appreciated and valued (4)
 - treated with respect and welcomed (3)
 - commitment and engagement (1)
 - needed a job where fit in (1)

- **Sound organization with effective leadership** **T=5**

 - well organized and well run (2)
 - community reputation (2)
 - great supervision and learning (1)

- **Helping address food insecurity (1)** **T=5**

 - face-to-face interactions with clients (2)
 - working with people (1)
 - importance of food (1)

- **Community support for program and mission** **T=3**

 - giving, supportive community (3)

WHAT IS IT ABOUT MFB THAT HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY SUCCESSFUL

Again, staff responses to the question about what has made MFB especially successful and makes them proud to be an employee focused primarily on the organizational culture of MFB. Being treated with respect, feeling empowered by the acceptance of individual ideas and suggestions in problem solving and decision making, and a keen awareness that “we are all in the same boat” seems to permeate the organizational climate and creates an environment conducive to both personal growth and comfort. Selected quotes from staff discussions helps enrich these points even further:

The environment is what made me want to be here and what makes it so successful. I came in as a client before and the way you get treated is so different than any other government agency or entity. It is a lot more welcoming. There is a lot of respect and you are treated more like a person.

When you get here you realize how empowered and supported volunteers are to creatively find ways to solve a problem. That is unique. I think it is unique in everything. Wall Street wouldn't have happened because they were afraid to say anything.

It is a ridiculously healthy place to work. I am spoiled for future ventures. There is a great staff and volunteer environment. And they go hand-in-hand. It is really easy to do your best at work everyday. You feel you are making a difference. You feel you can be heard and chase after things that are important to you. So it's been easy to work here.

Staff also mentioned the innovative programs and approaches used to address food insecurity and voiced a sense of pride in being able to tackle such a complex issue: “ We can make it happen in our little corner of the world. . .MFB is doing some amazing things in terms of helping people across the state and in other countries. For example, the truck deal - \$300,000 for refrigerated trucks so that major food banks in the state could do what we are doing.”

List 6.2: What is it about MFB that you think has been especially successful and makes you proud to be an MFB employee?

- **Organizational climate/culture of support and empowerment and “we are in this together (6)** T=18
 - treated with respect and welcomed (4)
 - great team approach (3)
 - everyone works hard (1)
 - commitment and engagement (3)
 - sense of ownership (1)
 - making a difference in people's lives (1)

- **Innovative programs and approaches (1)** T=4
 - program synthesis (3)

- **Community investment in MFB (2)** T=4
 - community reputation (1)
 - community partnerships (1)

THREE THINGS MFB DOES BEST THAT NEED TO CONTINUE

List 6.3 illustrates the key themes and subthemes that emerged after analyzing staff responses to the question about what they viewed as three things MFB does best that they would like to see continue in the future. Themes cut across a number of areas but the most important element for staff was to continue in their ability to serve everyone who needed food “without discrimination.” One staff member stated, “I’m glad we don’t do some kind of litmus test.” Another staff member’s comments summarized the prevailing attitude about this issue:

I like that people can come here and when they call and say what do I have to do to get the food, I just say, “Come down.” And if we had to screen them I wouldn’t want to work here any more, if we had to change the way we provide our services.

Creatively resolving issues and meeting challenges was another key theme which addressed MFB’s ability to develop innovative programs to meet food needs of various populations, such as the elderly and children, and the program’s success at securing grants and raising funds:

I think that one of the things I love about the Food Bank is that regardless of the challenges we have, and we can have challenges solving a problem or dealing with an issue, we creatively try to resolve it and there is a certain degree of flexibility we have to make things work. I have never seen us run into something we are not able to fix or resolve by putting our heads together.

List 6.3: What are the 3 things that MFB does best that you would like to see continue into the future?

- **Serve everyone (6)** T=8
 - empowerment clients(1)
 - compassion and nonjudgmental (1)

- **Creatively resolve issues and meet challenges (1)** T=6
 - innovative programs (4)
 - strong funding and grant writing (1)

- **Volunteer program and volunteers (3)** T=4
 - staff and volunteer partnerships (1)

- **Good stewards of community resources and talents (3)** T=3
- **Community support (1)** T=3
 -good donor relationships (2)

Staff were also proud of the volunteer program which is “raised up as one of the strongest in Missoula due to all the people who have created it over the years” and being good stewards of community resources and talents:

Our ability to truly and respectfully translate our community’s resources and talents and use them effectively within the organization...whether that is time, resources, food, whatever else. We are so inviting of people wherever they are at. We want to make sure we always welcome people as they are talented and equipped to help.

CHANGES THAT WOULD ENABLE MFB TO CONTINUE BEING SUCCESSFUL

Staff members were also asked how they might change MFB to make it more successful and operate at its best. The most dominant themes that emerged from the content analysis as illustrated in List 6.4 concerned building organizational capacity, addressing facility challenges and changing specific processes and procedures to be more time efficient, improve communication, and improve food access. An additional theme addressed the desire to spend more time on advocacy and policy in an effort to deal with food insecurity from a social/structural level in addition to distributing emergency food at an individual level.

Subthemes connected to building organizational capacity concerned expanding existing programs and creating new ones. Staff addressed the need to build in processes where feedback about the program was structured into the daily operations so for example, “volunteers could openly whine” to further support the healthy environment already in place at the Food Bank. Some concern was also voiced about having inefficiencies built into the operational system because of “growing pains” and a “reach that is so big now” yet how to retain “the genuine, homegrown, folksy feel of our interactions and yet still be efficient and be good stewards of what people have given us.” Growth also appears to be pushing on and compromising existing communication strategies:

I’d like to be able to look ahead and see things on calendars and have lead time on certain projects. There are so many of us who have so many things going on that sometimes its hard to get everybody’s calendar connected and that’s something I am thinking about.

List 6.4: What are the 3 wishes or 3 things you would like to change that would enable MFB to continue to be successful and operate at its best?

- **Building organizational capacity** **T=10**
 - create new programs (4)
 - children and families not reached (2)
 - expand existing programs (1)
 - reach broader than staff to do it (1)
 - reached capacity with efficiency (1)
 - need IT specialist (1)

- **Facility challenges (4)** **T=9**
 - better bus transportation (3)
 - more parking for clients (2)

- **Changes in processes and procedures** **T=6**
 - how to be more efficient with time (3)
 - how we distribute food to clients in carts and rationing (1)
 - improved communication system (1)
 - increased hours for client access (1)
 - more produce in the summer (1)

- **Spending more time on advocacy and policy (2)** **T=5**
 - poor nutritional quality of gov't food (3)

Facility challenges also surfaced for staff as they have with other program stakeholder groups. More parking for clients and a better system of bus transportation to the Food Bank were offered as concerns. An additional concern was about limited space and space needs compromised by an ever-increasing need to store and distribute more food to more people:

We have some facility challenges and we have done a really good job coming up with a solution. Bill has more space in his warehouse where we can store food and what that does is gives us more room to work in back. I know at some point we will have to think about a different facility and it's hard because I love this space and the hominess of it but I don't want to become like this big warehouse that is cold and people come in and there is nothing warm about it. I want to have a nice store front, to store food efficiently and safely and how that works is a big question in my mind.

Changes in specific processes and procedures were also suggested ranging from ways to be more time efficient to increasing the hours clients have access to the Food Bank. One major policy issue voiced was about the poor nutritional quality of the government food provided for clients:

Another thing is that we don't have a lot of control over the government food that comes in and it's not the most high in nutrition, like the blocks of cheese. I know the seniors love it but it's not really cheese. We don't have control of that but so many of our senior clients are watching their salts and we try to supplement that food with our own food but I think it is a systematic thing...sort of the food we get from government commodities are generally canned and high sodium – pork in a can with juices. I'd like to see that be improved. We try to supplement all of that with Garden City Harvest. We had someone come in and do a nutritional assessment of our food and we've tried doing brown rice instead of white rice. But how does that system change where our government food is of a lesser quality?

ADDITIONS, CHANGES OR MODIFICATION TO MFB'S MISSION STATEMENT

Staff members were asked for their input on what changes ought to be made to MFB's mission statement in light of upcoming strategic planning efforts. Questions surfaced about the purpose of a mission statement and not wanting it "to read to people as our call to arms or marching orders or our to-do list" and wondering who a mission statement is suppose to appeal to because "we talk about being mission-driven and everyone is behind the mission but I think if you polled people and asked, what is the mission, you'd get a thousand different answers." Clearly, however, staff thought that "dignity should be somewhere in the statement itself. It should be the guiding principle." Additional comments identified the need to foreground values instead of tasks and consider having an identity statement instead that lets "people know who we are and who we generally serve and identity is more than a specific mission we carry out."

List 6.5: If you could add, change, or modify or refine MFBs mission statement to incorporate the best of MFB how would it read?

- **Questions about what a mission statement is for (6) T=6**
- **Dignity should be added to the statement (3) T=3**
- **Seems too much like a to-do list (3) T=3**
- **More like values than tasks (1) T=1**
- **Like that it captures what we do (1) T=1**
- **Need an identity statement (1) T=1**

OTHER QUESTIONS IMPORTANT TO ASK

Staff members' primary concerns when asked if there were any questions the facilitator may not have asked important to the evaluation of MFB was about next steps and how to strategically address change around growth and "hone in on those facility challenges." In addition, staff recognized that as growth begins to challenge many of the existing structures and processes at the Food Bank, it is important, if not vital, to shore up and retain communication to "know what the other half is working on."

List 6.6: Other questions not asked that are important?

- **More specifics re: how to address needed change (5) T=5**
- **Be good to know what everyone else is working on (1) T=1**
- **Better communication (1) T=1**

SUMMARY OF STAFF SURVEY FINDINGS

Staff members were most attracted to the work at MFB because of its solid reputation in the community and the culture of acceptance, appreciation, and respect within the organization. The word "dignity," something staff members felt ought to be explicit in the mission statement, seemed to capture both the atmosphere and practices at the Food Bank. Procedures and policies in place are rooted in dignity. Staff feel empowered and creative. They are proud to be employees of an organization where much of the leadership is shared and the community stands behind their work.

Staff members aligned powerfully with their mission of "serving everyone" and meeting new challenges with the kind of brilliance that comes from nurturing spaces where personal and professional growth is rewarded and creativity is prized.

The staff recommended changes to MFB that would build organizational capacity to address an external environment witnessing an unprecedented influx of people seeking assistance and the stress and strain associated with trying to "keep the boat afloat" as more weight threatens to capsize their efforts. The overall sense was one of "Yes, we are capable and committed but we must be more efficient with time, shore up communication processes to better coordinate our work and reach out more to those who may be underserved, especially in bad economic times." Facility challenges, although to this point being dealt with creatively, were likely to continue being problematic in the future if no improvements were made.

REVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS FOR PARTNERSHIP MAPPING

During times of high demand and diminishing funding resources, nonprofits often find it necessary to work together to produce solutions that none of them working independently could achieve.²⁰ To

²⁰ Gray, B. (1989). *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

lighten the load, in a sense, to capitalize on different resources and to achieve shared goals staff were asked the following questions related to building partnerships within the community as part of the facilitated discussion:

1. What organizations, agencies, and community groups does MFB work with in a collaborative capacity to achieve its mission?
2. What populations or groups of people are served through these partnerships?
3. What are the most successful partnerships you have been a part of at MFB and what made these successful?
4. What are the most compelling opportunities for partnership you see (such as collaborating with new vendors, other agencies, volunteer groups, donors, etc.) that promise the most unprecedented results for you and MFB?
5. What might happen to realize the promise of these partnership responsibilities?

PARTNERSHIP MAPPING FINDINGS

Table 6.1 below outlines the results from MFB’s partnership mapping exercise. The table lists organizations and groups divided by populations served by MFB through collaborative efforts.

Table 6.1: Partnership Mapping – Who We Collaborate With and Who We Serve

Children	Seniors & Homebound	Homeless	Everyone	Families	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Flagship Program ▪ Boys and Girls Club ▪ Zootown Arts ▪ Schools (Kid’s Table) ▪ Head Start ▪ Early Head Start ▪ Rattlesnake Elementary School Family Resource Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Missoula Aging Services ▪ Noon’s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poverello ▪ At-Risk Housing Coalition ▪ Homeless Connect ▪ Share House ▪ Missoula 3:16 ▪ Summer Arts & Leaders Camp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GCH ▪ United Way ▪ MFBN ▪ Safeway ▪ Pizza Hut ▪ Animeal ▪ Albertson’s ▪ China Buffet ▪ OPA ▪ SNAP ▪ Living Art ▪ Health Dept. ▪ CFAC ▪ MNPN ▪ Orange St. Food Farm ▪ CDBG ▪ UM Dining Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Albertson’s ▪ Costco ▪ Good Food Store ▪ Le Petit ▪ Safeway ▪ Orange Street Food Farm ▪ Missoulian ▪ MFBN ▪ Noon’s ▪ Parenting Place ▪ EFNEP ▪ OPA ▪ China Buffet ▪ Missoula School District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UM ▪ MFBN ▪ UM Catering ▪ Rosauer’s ▪ First Call Computers ▪ Bernice’s ▪ Chamber of Commerce ▪ Opportunity Resources ▪ Mountain Line Bus ▪ Poverello ▪ UM Dining Services ▪ Pizza Hut ▪ Washington Foundation ▪ Pantry

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ KPAX ▪ KECI ▪ Missoula City ▪ Missoula County ▪ United Way ▪ MFCU ▪ 1st Security Bank ▪ US Gov't. ▪ Community Donors ▪ USDA/ ▪ FSO ▪ FEMA ▪ Out to Lunch ▪ Geomatrix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Central Kitchen ▪ Two Sisters' Catering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partners ▪ Goats
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It should be noted that Table 6.1 lists 76 separate organizations or groups, both profit and nonprofit, and governmental and nongovernmental entities that Missoula Food Bank has established a partnership with to distribute food or to secure necessary funding.²¹

MOST SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Table 6.2 illustrates what staff decided were the most successful partnerships they had forged with organizations and community groups. These were brainstormed and are therefore not listed in any particular order.

Table 6.2: Most Successful Partnerships

Costco	UM Dining Services
Garden City Harvest	Office of Public Assistance
Poverello	Out to Lunch
Albertson's	Safeway
Montana Food Bank Network	Cardboard Man
Missoula Aging Services	Washington Foundation
Farmers' Market	Good Food Store
United Way	Silver Foundation
Missoula County Gov't	Lewelleyn Foundation
GOATS	Wallace Foundation
Flagship	Gallagher Charitable Trust
Summer Arts & Leadership	CDGB

²¹ Given the nature of the partnership exercise, it is highly likely that staff overlooked some active partnerships solely on the basis of limited time available to complete the exercise.

WHAT MAKES PARTNERSHIPS SUCCESSFUL

Table 6.3 lists what staff considered to be the most significant elements for creating successful partnerships. These are not listed in any particular order and so it can be assumed that each element contributes in some important way toward making partnerships successful. The elements identify key issues concerning reciprocity, personal and professional relationships, MFB's solid reputation in the community, and making the best of and focusing on local resources to achieve specific interorganizational shared goals. Ultimately the uniting goal that overrides all others is being able to provide something essentially necessary to better serve Missoula residents in need by sharing funds, time, work, and other necessary resources.

Table 6.3: What Makes Partnerships Successful?

- Quantity of donation
- Consistency/quality of food
- Necessary to best serve clients
- Unique service provided
- Good reputation of MFB
- Focus on using local resources
- Local financial/community support
- Relationships – working toward goal
- Professional trust and reciprocity
- Something in it for both partners
- Personal relationship
- Two agencies – extension of one another
- Making some programs work via sponsorship

PARTNERSHIP POSSIBILITIES

Staff were also asked to envision the most compelling opportunities they could imagine with new vendors, other agencies, volunteer groups, donors, and so on that could promise the most unprecedented results for Missoula Food Bank. They discussed numerous possibilities for collaboration as listed below in Table 6.4. Note that a number of these address moving to a more proactive role in securing additional sources of local food, expanding existing involvements to gain more food access for clients, and identifying clients who are not currently being served but who, nonetheless, are in need of services. Additionally, new possibilities also included helping to empower and educate clients by assisting them in building skills in food procurement, processing and preservation.

Table 6.4: Partnership Possibilities

- Dickenson Continuing Ed and school system
- Local farmers via CFAC
- More/expanded involvement with EFNAP
- Gleaning game meat
- MSU Extension Services
- Processing plants (Fish, Wildlife & Parks)

- Other restaurants – more healthy options
- Expanding donor partnerships
- Farmers putting land into production for MFB
- Drying, canning, freezing – MUD, BSS project
- MFBN – policy and outreach
- Churches who distribute food
- Filling the gap – to identify people who are not using services

NEXT STEPS

In terms of next steps or how to begin moving in the direction of achieving some new partnerships, staff, as noted in Table 6.5, suggested digging in deeper to understand the elements that have made their existing partnerships successful, working on strengthening many of the already existing partnerships and gathering information on successes that have been achieved elsewhere with other food banks, nationally and internationally.

Table 6.5: Next Steps

- Looking more closely at what makes some partnership really work
- Research other programs in other locations re: food recovery
- Strengthening some existing partnerships (e.g., GCH)
- Make inventory statistics accessible
- With Dean’s job looking at food security more broadly and in community

SUMMARY OF PARTNERSHIP MAPPING EXERCISE

An immediate, visual observation from the mapping exercise was the large number of partnerships MFB has created over the years. Certainly these partnerships are unique and each has varying levels of collaboration but it definitely suggests that MFB has built considerable knowledge and expertise in this area.

The Food Bank’s reputation in the community as a team player, fervently focused on its mission, contributes to successful partnerships along with good face-to-face relationship building skills that have fostered trust, respect and reciprocity. Opportunities for partnership expand beyond food service programs to alternative modes of addressing community food security such as gardens, connecting with farmers and ranchers, and teaching skills related to food production and preservation. Next steps in building new partnerships include gaining a better understanding of key elements of successful partnerships and looking to the literature for examples of exemplary programs, projects and practices.

CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS – MISSOULA FOOD BANK BOARD OF DIRECTORS

REVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Ten board members provided information, most by attending a facilitated discussion that lasted approximately 1.5 hours. Several board members unable to attend, submitted their responses to the following questions electronically:

1. What do you see as some of the significant impacts of MFB from your perspective as a board member?
2. What are the 3 best things about MFB you would like to see continue?
3. If there were 3 things you could change to improve MFB what would they be?
4. Based on what you noted as changes you would like to see implemented, what organizational goals would you set for the future to address these changes?
5. What do you see as some of the biggest challenges facing the delivery of MFB's services now and in the coming years?
6. What are the most compelling opportunities for partnerships that you see, those that promise the most unprecedented results for Missoula Food Bank?
7. Are there any questions that were not asked that you think are important to the evaluation of MFB?

MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF MFB

As indicated on List 7.1, three broad themes that emerged from board members' responses to the question about what they perceived as the most significant impacts of MFB's work focused on the community, the people served by MFB and the staff and volunteers. The most dominant theme concerning impacts on the community consisted of addressing social justice as a food security issue and advocating for food access as a human right; providing a way for the community to get involved in solving hunger locally; and serving as a reminder that issues concerning food insecurity are taken seriously in the Missoula community. One board member reported,

I have worked with low income families in nutrition programs over the years and I know from the clients' perspective they appreciate how they are treated with respect and part of it is the overall real mission and social justice view. People and children deserve not to be hungry."

Along those same lines another board member added the following which summarizes the subthemes of social justice and advocacy, community involvement and “taking care of our neighbors:”

We provide a social justice/action structure for the community to be involved with each other. I come to the Food Bank from the perspective that it is not okay that people go hungry so there is a social justice aspect to it. Not unlike churches or food banks, the Food Bank provides an opportunity for people in the community to participate, providing food, providing money, and volunteering.

List 7.1: What do you see as some of the most significant impacts of MFB?

- **Impacts on the community** **T=17**
 - social justice and advocacy (5)
 - providing ways for community to get involved in solving hunger problem (4)
 - community trust in MFB (3)
 - reminder that we take care of our neighbors (2)
 - great partnerships in the community (1)
 - businesses feel good they can donate unsellable food (1)
 - increase awareness about food insecurity (1)

- **Impacts on the people MFB serves** **T=16**
 - MFB feeds so many people in the community (9)
 - cutting edge and innovative programs (3)
 - nonjudgmental, respectful, giving (2)
 - referrals and information re: other programs (1)
 - nutritional impact on kids (1)

- **Impacts on the staff and volunteers** **T=5**
 - working at a place where staff feel valued (3)
 - sense of accomplishments for volunteers and staff (2)

The second most frequently occurring theme addressed impacts on the people MFB serves and the fact that “the Food Bank delivers something concrete. The food gets put on the table quite literally.” As has been repeated throughout this report thus far, another key subtheme that emerged in board members’ discussion had to do with MFB’s cutting edge, innovative programs:

Missoula always seems to be on the cutting edge and I think the impacts on the children’s programs, the back packs and the feeding programs, are very significant in terms of meeting a need in the community

Board members recognized the impacts of working in a setting where staff and volunteers feel valued and appreciated with “lots of affirmations” and “friendly and supportive bosses.” Within this

context, staff and volunteers “feel good about working at a place that provides people a basic human need.”

BEST THINGS ABOUT MFB THAT SHOULD CONTINUE

Clearly, board members were on the same page when they discussed what they perceived as the best things about MFB they would like to see continue. A theme titled organizational and administrative excellence noted on List 7.2 captures board members’ ideas as they discussed MFB’s innovative client programs including the volunteer program, and the ability to raise funds, attract and retain excellent staff and the culture of dignity, respect and kindness reflected in staff and volunteer practices and organizational processes and procedures. Comments were also made about the stellar relationships forged with other organizations and groups and MFB’s reputation in the community. Selected quotes from board members’ discussion provide additional depth and richness in understanding the meaning of these subthemes:

MFB excels at donor relationships and that is a big credit to the staff. Our donors from small to large are very loyal.

I think MFB excels in innovative programs that a typical program does not do. That is number one.

The first thing we do is give dignity, respect and kindness. We show clients and volunteers that we are a deeply compassionate organization and there is a sense of joy that I think is part of who we are.

List 7.2: Best things about MFB you would like to see continue?

- **Organizational and administrative excellence** **T=30**
 - innovative and cutting edge programs (8)
 - volunteer program (2)
 - attracting volunteers (1)
 - fundraising ability (6)
 - donor relationships (2)
 - excellent staff (4)
 - dignity, respect and kindness (3)
 - partnerships with other agencies (2)
 - community outreach (1)
 - reputation in the community (1)

- **Programmatic processes and procedures** **T=3**
 - process to get food is easy (2)
 - referrals to other services (1)

Board members also mentioned specific programmatic processes and procedures important to MFB’s operations congruent with the culture of kindness: “The interview is simple. Everyone is friendly. I’m sure it’s not easy for anyone to come in.” Several board members commented on referrals made to other agencies and services and how crucial these were to the overall philosophy of the Food Bank which supports addressing food insecurity on more than the individual level alone.²²

WHAT BOARD MEMBERS WOULD CHANGE OR IMPROVE ABOUT MFB

List 7.3 summarizes the themes that emerged when board members were asked what three things they would change or improve about MFB. The major theme that emerged focused on growth and the increasing need for the Food Bank’s services, and as a result, the need for additional work, food storage, and client space: “Better physical space to meet the needs of clients and staff, including a large welcoming waiting room which would increase client dignity and choice.” Variations on this theme included “additional locations” or a “bigger store.” There was no disagreement about the fact that MFB needs more space to perform its mission.

Increasing its focus on social justice and the causes of hunger received considerable discussion: “The primary goal of any social justice organization is to reduce the need for services provided” and to increase the role of the board to advocate for food security which leads back to issues such as living wage.” The third most frequently occurring theme was about increasing MFB’s outreach to the community to increase its visibility, inform about its innovative programs and to create more partnerships with other organizations to “discuss what might be national trends in food insecurity and in food banks and pantries.”

List 7.3: If there were three things you could change or improve about MFB what would they be?

- **More and improved space (8)** **T=8**
- **Increase focus on social justice and roots of hunger (2)** **T=7**
 - move from enabling to empowering (2)
 - more discussion re: food security and addressing it (2)
 - increase advocacy role of the board (1)
- **More outreach** **T=6**
 - increase visibility of MFB and programming and outreach (5)
 - more networking partnerships with other organizations (1)
- **Making access easier for clients** **T=3**

²² Missoula Food Bank’s operating philosophy, the principles and theories upon which practice are based, can be reviewed in the logic model completed by MFB’s evaluation team located in chapter 2 of the report.

- improve clients' experience (1)
- increase food bank hours (1)
- improve transportation to and from MFB (1)

- **More discussions re: future growth (2)** **T=2**
- **Increase involvement of the board (1)** **T=1**
- **Educating clients on how to eat well (1)** **T=1**

Additional themes that emerged concerned creating more access for clients by improving transportation to and from MFB and increasing Food Bank hours. Although discussions focused on “opportunities to serve the community” and increasing the board’s involvement and not just being “that necessary body that is somewhat removed” from day-to-day operations.

ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

Board members were asked what organizational goals they might set for the future based on the changes and improvements they recommended. List 7.4 clearly sets forth the need for a capital campaign as the dominant theme.

I think we need to educate the public that the current facility is outdated and not large enough for the Food Bank’s unfortunately growing clientele and we need to educate the public that we are out looking for money and/or space for a new facility.

Board members recommended getting ahead of the curve on this issue by “quantifying objectives for a new space” because strategic planning was likely to lay the course for a new facility: “When we talk about quantifying what our needs are we are going to need some consultation with folks who have expertise in this area and who can help us establish and help us run a capital campaign.” On this note of needing to plan ahead, board members suggested that now was the time to start gathering information to assess MFB’s long range needs. Being informed would require gathering information from other food banks that are experiencing similar growth pains. One board member suggested a “joint planning/strategic direction session with staff and board members together in the same room discussing the future direction of the organization.”

List 7.4: What organizational goals would you set for the future?

- **Capital campaign (8)** **T=18**
 - educate public re: need for new facility and funding (4)
 - quantify need for space etc. (3)
 - secure new or remodel facility (3)
- **Gathering more information to help in** **T=3**

setting goals

- independent review of MFB’s needs and how to address them (1)
- gathering comparative information from other food banks (1)
- joint strategic planning with staff and board (1)

- **Goals to improve client access to MFB** **T=3**
 - outreach to new clients (2)
 - improve transportation to MFB (1)
- **Directed discussion re: important topics** **T=2**
 - real discussion re: food security (1)
 - formal discussion re: facility and program needs (1)
- **Attract new donors (1)** **T=1**

Additional goals mentioned concerned improving clients access, engaging in directed discussion about food security and facility and program needs along with goals to attract new donors.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING DELIVERY OF MFB SERVICES

List 7.5 represents the main themes that emerged when board members were asked what they saw as the biggest challenges facing the delivery of MFB’s services. As noted, administrative demands, food access, and facility constraints were the top three themes. The most frequently occurring theme concerned administrative demands but the challenges outlined in List 7.5 go hand-in-hand and can be conceptualized as a ripple effect where increasing need for food access creates administrative demands and foregrounds the inadequacies of MFB’s facility space to address these issues. Besides funding concerns, managing in times of change and balancing staff needs and development poses additional challenges, especially when the change is occurring in a space that is no longer adequate to meet the demand.

List 7.5: What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the delivery of MFB’s services?

- **Administrative demands** **T=11**
 - need for more staff to handle growth (4)
 - funding concerns with government cutbacks (2)
 - managing impending changes administratively (1)
 - find new ways to get message out there (1)
 - donor fatigue (1)
 - need for staff development for retention (1)
 - remaining posed for change (1)
- **Impact on food access** **T=8**
 - need for food will grow (5)
 - changes in government subsidies programs (3)

▪ **Facility constraints**

T=5

- space not adequate to meet the needs (4)
- parking and transportation (1)

Board members were also concerned with the increased need for food: “I believe that the needs in our community will continue to grow and we will need to be able to sustain that growth by more dollars and more staff and more programs.” The discussion tied into being able to “estimate future need and what variables are going to go into that. . .” and also included “the changing demographic of people we serve...will it be more children, will it be more seniors, more people in outlying areas?” The likelihood of government cutbacks in program funding and subsidies factored into the discussion about planning for “an increasing homeless population and high unemployment over the next two-plus years.” The following selected board member quotes provide more details about the biggest challenges facing the delivery of MFB’s services:

We get a lot of government food in terms of commodities and that could change in a heart beat. We have not had serious problems but we can not depend on the government whether it is for the ROOTS program, food stamps to our clients or TANF money...but this is something we have to not get complacent about.

Staff is one of the first things that struck me...how actually small the staff is for the amount of work. That’s pretty amazing to see all the programs that are put in place and then the figures here and see the small number of people who do that. I think if we are going to rebuild the food bank, in my mind, there needs to be a staff increase. I don’t see how such a small staff can manage this to begin with.

MOST COMPELLING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Because of impending changes and challenges, board members were asked about what they thought were the most compelling opportunities for partnerships with local nonprofits or businesses. While the board felt that many important partnerships already existed, they discussed other nonprofits with similar missions, and the possibilities of building upon existing relationships. The following comments by several board members summarize the discussion well:

I’ve heard that we need to increase our partnership with the Poverello Center so about education outreach and how a capital campaign could work in with that but perhaps a joint public outreach about the services that are offered. Maybe someone at the Poverello has more expertise in a given area that we don’t.

I think we should be looking at partnerships beyond functionality but in terms of cooperation and construction. In my previous life we built fire stations to make them affordable so we would cooperate with the Parks’ Department, the cop shop, etc. Find agencies that are looking to do the same thing and see if there are ways we can share the costs.

Other board members suggested thinking about “realtors, commercial development, architects, and builders – that kind of group” given the interest in looking at a new building for MFB. In addition, a strong subtheme concerned being in a position to attract local media to the Food Bank’s story: “The Food Bank shouldn’t blow its nose without the Missoulian knowing about it.” Additional comments addressed becoming even more visible in the community by presenting classes on food security, and connecting with other groups doing community food system’s work such as the Farmers’ Market, gardening programs, and North Missoula Community Development Corporation’s commercial kitchen, café and food cooperative.

List 7.6: What are the most compelling opportunities for partnerships that you see?

- **Local nonprofit organizations** **T=13**

 - WORD (4)
 - partnering with other organizations who have space available (2)
 - groups involved in other community food work (2)
 - NMCDC, Co-op and Kitchen (1)
 - Poverello (1)
 - YWCA (1)
 - CFAC (1)
 - seniors (1)

- **Local media and outreach (3)** **T=5**

 - adult/community education re: food security (1)
 - Frenchtown connection (1)

- **Encouraging outreach to other resources for clients (3)** **T=4**

 - food stamp program (1)

- **Local business** **T=2**

 - local banks (1)
 - realtors, commercial development and architects (1)

- **Already have great partnerships (1)** **T=1**

OTHER QUESTIONS THAT HAVEN’T BEEN ASKED

List 7.7 illustrates some additional questions and concerns board members raised when asked if there were any questions not asked during the facilitated discussion that would be helpful to the evaluation process. While several board members thought there was nothing left to add, others raised some issues important to the strategic planning process set to take place in the fall. These related to gathering information about the predictive quality of the Food Bank’s statistics and accessing information about how other food banks across the country are dealing with similar issues concerning increased need for services and expansion. In addition, given the intensity of the planning needs, communication between the board and the program staff will be vital.

List 7.7: Any questions that haven't been asked?

- **Related to planning process** **T=5**
 - are our statistics predictive (1)
 - have we queried people adequate to planning process (1)
 - accessing knowledge created about food banks (1)
 - addressing communication (1)
 - distance decreased between board and program (1)

- **None I can think of (3)** **T=3**

- **Where can clients get personal products (1)** **T=1**

SUMMARY OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS FINDINGS

Board members thought the most significant impact of MFB related to the organization's social justice mission to provide food to everyone in need. The Food Bank's visibility in the community and the board's advocacy role in addressing some of the root causes of food insecurity simultaneously made the community more aware of food insecurity locally and transmitted a message about there being multiple ways to address it. Board members understood the importance of the Food Bank's respectful, affirmative climate on clients, staff, and volunteers. They recognized the innovative, cutting edge programs created in this climate and a particular congruency of philosophy that filters through various levels of the organization and extends to the community as well.

Board members articulated the need for addressing facility issues soon and moving from "enabling to empowering" by increasing their focus on social justice and the root causes of hunger. Based on these issues, they felt more outreach to the community was in order. Organizational goals they set for the future addressed the facility issue by suggesting a capital campaign to raise funds for a new facility or to remodel the existing one. Along these same lines, they recommended gathering more information about how other food banks are dealing with the need to provide more food, and as a result, the need for more space in which to perform this function.

The organizational challenges identified concerned impending administrative demands brought on by increases in the need for food. Opportunities for partnerships related to developing connections with groups and individuals with specific expertise to inform the process of moving key organizational goals forward.

CHAPTER 8: FINDINGS – MISSOULA FOOD BANK DONORS

REVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

One hundred surveys were mailed to individual and corporate MFB donors. These were randomly selected from a list of donors although there was a need to ensure that donors making small and large contributions were contacted as part of the sample. Of the 100 surveys mailed, 26 were returned which is a 26% response rate.²³

Of those donors who completed a survey, most were individual food or financial donors or both. In total, 73% of respondents were at least moderately familiar with MFB. Of this group, 31% endorsed being very familiar with MFB. In total, 78% believed that MFB has been at least moderately efficient stewards of their donations and resources. Of this group, 69% believed MFB was a very efficient steward of their donations and resources.

DONORS' SATISFACTION WITH MISSOULA FOOD BANK

Table 8.1 lists the items donors were asked concerning their satisfaction level with various aspects of MFB operations. Almost 90% of donors were at least somewhat satisfied with how MFB meets community needs for access to emergency food. Almost 70% of this group was very satisfied with this aspect of MFB operations. As noted in Table 8.1, the remainder of the analyses indicate that donors who felt knowledgeable enough to reply were mostly satisfied with various aspects of the Food Bank. It should be noted that almost 31% of donors completing the survey did not feel knowledgeable enough about program governance to comment. The only items where donors expressed any dissatisfaction concerned the facility space. Only 38% were at least somewhat satisfied with MFB's facility while almost 12% expressed some dissatisfaction.

Table 8.1: Donor Survey – Satisfaction with Missoula Food Bank (N=26)

To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following:	Frequency	Percentage
Meeting community needs for access to emergency food:		
Very satisfied	18	69.3
Somewhat satisfied	5	19.3
Neutral	1	3.8
Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0.0
Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
Not sure	2	7.6
Missing	0	0.0
Food drives:		
Very satisfied	18	69.3
Somewhat satisfied	2	7.6
Neutral	4	15.5
Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0.0

²³ Not including a stamped and addressed envelop with each survey and no reminder postcard being sent was an administrative decision to save on costs given that donors especially want to be assured that their contributions are used wisely. In hindsight, perhaps an online survey may have made more sense in terms of lessening program evaluation costs overall.

	Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Not sure	0	0.0
	Missing	2	7.6
Providing emergency food services:	Very satisfied	17	65.4
	Somewhat satisfied	3	11.5
	Neutral	1	3.8
	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Not sure	5	19.3
	Missing	0	0.0
Volunteer program:	Very satisfied	17	65.4
	Somewhat satisfied	1	3.8
	Neutral	2	7.6
	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Not sure	6	23.2
	Missing	0	0.0
Facility location:	Very satisfied	13	50.0
	Somewhat satisfied	3	11.5
	Neutral	5	19.3
	Somewhat dissatisfied	1	3.8
	Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Not sure	2	7.6
	Missing	2	7.6
MFB organizational governance:	Very satisfied	13	50.0
	Somewhat satisfied	1	3.8
	Neutral	1	3.8
	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Not sure	8	30.9
	Missing	3	11.5
Fund raising abilities:	Very satisfied	11	42.3
	Somewhat satisfied	8	30.9
	Neutral	2	7.6
	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Not sure	4	15.4
	Missing	1	3.8
Facility space:	Very satisfied	4	15.4
	Somewhat satisfied	6	23.0
	Neutral	5	19.3
	Somewhat dissatisfied	3	11.5
	Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Not sure	6	23.2
	Missing	2	7.6

TRUST AND RESPECT FOR MFB

MFB donors were asked if their contributions indicated trust and respect for the organization, how these were earned. Of those donors who responded to this open-ended question, most remarks fell within two dominant categories consisting of comments related to having a direct or indirect relationship with MFB and recognizing and having empathy for those needing food assistance in the community. The following donors' comments synthesize these two themes:

MFB provides the most basic service to people in our community. I get a sense of helping with a local need when we donate. There seems to be a well-run organization at MFB, so our money is being well spent.

I was a volunteer and saw how much good was being done with my money.

Other donor comments were about a mixture of knowing staff and volunteers and being aware of the Food Bank through the media and newspaper advertisements: "There are no negative stories and always good media information about need and your response." Others commented on "knowing families that have benefited from your services" and the Food Bank's respectful and welcoming environment as noted in this report by other program stakeholders:

Your whole attitude and climate of respectful giving and being a sensitive part of the community. . Efficient pick-up of donations, friendly volunteers, courteous communication from administration and development personnel.

List 8.1: How was your trust and respect for MFB earned?

- **Direct or indirect relationship with organization** **T=9**
 - know someone connected to MFB (5)
 - food bank environment (2)
 - been a volunteer at MFB (2)

- **Recognition of and empathy for community need** **T=8**

- **Media (3)** **T=3**
- **Numbers served in the community (2)** **T=3**
 - longevity (1)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUILDING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

List 8.2 contains the thematic categories from donors' responses about what opportunities they saw for building new partnerships beneficial to MFB. Donors had little information to contribute in response to this question but those who commented suggested more engagement of youth in food drives, "keeping good connections with U of M," and thinking about developing a "new location" near other programs used by people with limited access to resources such as Goodwill and YWCA.

List 8.2: What opportunities exist for building new partnerships that would benefit MFB?

- Opportunities for families and children to volunteer (3) T=3
- Good job (3) T=3
- Educational partnerships (2) T=2
- Faith-based opportunities (1) T=1
- Locating with/near other nonprofits (1) T=1

BEST THINGS ABOUT MFB

As noted in List 8.3, “meeting the food needs of the community” surfaced as the most frequently occurring theme in donors’ responses about what they thought were the best things about MFB. Subthemes concerned, “making it easy for people to obtain food,” “innovative programs for kids and the elderly,” and a “commitment to the community’s needs.” The second most dominant theme, a reoccurring pattern across stakeholder groups, was about “respect and kindness to clients,” “food without requirements,” and the “caring attitude of staff.” Donors also made a number of comments related to how the Food Bank raises community awareness about food insecurity through its food drives, outreach efforts, and collection bins. Other comments concerned the valuable opportunity the Food Bank offers for people who want to volunteer and the “excellent information you provide about resources used and needed.”

List 8.3: What are the best things about MFB?

- Meeting food needs (16) T=16
- Treatment of those in need (8) T=9
 - Referrals to other resources (1)
- Raise community awareness about food insecurity (1) T=6
 - Food drives (3)
 - Continued outreach for donations and volunteers (1)
 - Collection bins (1)
- Use of volunteers (3) T=4
 - Volunteer opportunities (1)
- Reports and information provided (2) T=2
- Not familiar enough to comment (1) T=1
- Reputation and stories of success (1) T=1

THINGS THAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The main theme that emerged when donors were asked what could be improved about MFB was the need “to enlarge the facility” and to “double your space to serve more.” Like other program stakeholders, they also suggested having more hours open to increase clients’ accessibility. Several donors recommended having more food to distribute including “more local fresh vegetables” and disseminating “more positive information on free media, TV and newspapers.”

List 8.4: What are the three things you think should be improved?

- **Address space issue (7)** T=7
-
- **Hours or more time to shop (4)** T=4
 - Make easy or more efficient for clients to get food (2)
- **More food (2)** T=2
- **More positive information about the work (2)** T=2
- **More program suggestions (1)** T=1

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Additional comments from donors primarily consisted of accolades and appreciation. For example, “You have my highest compliments. You do such honorable work!!” and “Thank you for all you do.” Two additional comments related to wanting to hear more success stories because “successes make one proud to be a contributor” and to clarify MFB’s relationship to the Montana Food Bank Network because, “I prefer to give just to Missoula as I can’t cover both.”

List 8.5: Additional comments?

- **Thank-yous and accolades (8)** T=8
- **Report more on successes (1)** T=1
- **Clarify relationship to Montana Food Bank Network (1)** T=1

SUMMARY OF DONOR SURVEY FINDINGS

Most donors’ trust and respect for MFB was earned as a result of a direct (being a volunteer) or indirect (knowing a volunteer or staff member) relationship with the Food Bank. Media coverage of MFB was another source of information that engendered donors’ trust and respect.

Donors were extremely satisfied with the Food Bank’s ability to address community needs for access to emergency food and create specific outreach food programs. Although they appeared to be the

program stakeholder group with the least amount of information about the organization's internal functioning, on the whole, they were pleased with most aspects of MFB's operations.. Donors were aware of the Food Bank's respectful, nonjudgmental treatment of clients and were pleased with how the Food Bank raised community awareness about food insecurity.

Similar to other stakeholder groups, donors were aware of facility space inadequacies. They also endorsed making it easier for clients to gain more access to food by increasing the hours the Food Bank was open and allowing clients to shop more frequently. Donors shared little information about potentially beneficial partnerships for MFB but some supported the idea that engaging more youth in volunteerism would be helpful for youth and the community.

CHAPTER 9: FINDINGS – MISSOULA FOOD BANK COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

REVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Fifty community stakeholder surveys were mailed out to directors of local nonprofit organizations, leaders in state government, local business people, media representatives and past MFB board members. Thirteen surveys were returned which is a response rate of 26%.²⁴

The majority of community stakeholders who completed the survey were from other nonprofit organizations. As a group, their average number of years of involvement with Missoula Food Bank was 11 years. Eighty-five percent of respondents had at least moderate familiarity with MFB. Sixty-two percent had collaborated with MFB in a community project, coalition building, public policy advocacy, or by donating resources such as time or expertise.

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION WITH MISSOULA FOOD BANK

Table 8.1 illustrates community stakeholders' level of satisfaction with various aspects of MFB's operation. Seventy-seven percent of respondents were very satisfied with MFB's ability to meet the community's need for access to emergency food and provision of emergency food services. Although the only area where some dissatisfaction was expressed concerned MFB's facility space, satisfaction declined as the topic area became more removed from what MFB does in the community to issues closer to home, meaning number of staff, program governance, volunteer program and so on. Given the small sample, it is exceedingly difficult to render any firm conclusions regarding community stakeholder responses although it appears as though some respondents did not feel adequately informed about the more internal aspects of the organization.

Table 8.1: Community Stakeholder Survey – Satisfaction with Missoula Food Bank (N=13)

To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following:	Frequency	Percentage
Meeting community need for access to emergency food:		
Very satisfied	10	77
Somewhat satisfied	0	0
Neutral	2	15
Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0
Very dissatisfied	0	0
Not sure	0	0
Missing	1	8

²⁴ As noted earlier in the report, perhaps the best way to increase response rates with community stakeholders is by administering online surveys.

Providing emergency food services:	Very satisfied	10	77
	Somewhat satisfied	0	0
	Neutral	2	15
	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0
	Not sure	0	0
	Missing	1	8
Communication with MFB staff:	Very satisfied	9	69
	Somewhat satisfied	0	0
	Neutral	2	15
	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0
	Not sure	1	8
	Missing	1	8
Food drives:	Very satisfied	8	62
	Somewhat satisfied	0	0
	Neutral	2	15
	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0
	Not sure	0	0
	Missing	3	23
Facility location:	Very satisfied	6	45
	Somewhat satisfied	3	23
	Neutral	1	8
	Somewhat dissatisfied	1	8
	Very dissatisfied	0	0
	Not sure	1	8
	Missing	1	8
Effectiveness of collaborative relationships:	Very satisfied	6	45
	Somewhat satisfied	1	8
	Neutral	1	8
	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0
	Not sure	3	23
	Missing	2	16
Number of volunteers:	Very satisfied	6	45
	Somewhat satisfied	0	0
	Neutral	2	16
	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0
	Not sure	3	23
	Missing	2	16
Fundraising abilities:	Very satisfied	6	45
	Somewhat satisfied	0	0
	Neutral	2	16

	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0
	Not sure	3	23
	Missing	2	16
MFB organizational governance:	Very satisfied	5	39
	Somewhat satisfied	1	8
	Neutral	2	16
	Somewhat dissatisfied	1	8
	Very dissatisfied	0	0
	Not sure	3	23
	Missing	1	8
Volunteer program:	Very satisfied	4	31
	Somewhat satisfied	0	0
	Neutral	3	23
	Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0
	Very dissatisfied	0	0
	Not sure	1	8
	Missing	5	39
Facility space:	Very satisfied	2	16
	Somewhat satisfied	3	23
	Neutral	2	16
	Somewhat dissatisfied	3	23
	Very dissatisfied	0	0
	Not sure	1	8
	Missing	2	16
Number of staff :	Very satisfied	2	16
	Somewhat satisfied	2	16
	Neutral	2	16
	Somewhat dissatisfied	1	8
	Very dissatisfied	0	0
	Not sure	3	23
	Missing	3	23

BEST THINGS ABOUT MFB

The key themes that emerged when community stakeholders responded to the question about what they thought were the best things about MFB were distributing food and the staff and volunteers and their ability to do outreach to the community. Stakeholders commented on MFB's "ability to serve so many people," "the responsive, engaged staff with longevity," and its "great reputation, visibility and marketing." Others commented on MFB's advocacy efforts and the food drives and other community events, activities and programs that engage the participation of many community residents. Concerning treatment of clients, one stakeholder commented,

You have a respectful approach to patrons. It shows in the way you distribute food and the way you discuss people you serve in the community.

List 9.1: Best things about MFB

- **Distributing food and feeding people (6)** T=6
- **Staff and volunteers (6)** T=6
- **Community outreach (4)** T=6
 - community engagement (1)
 - community reputation (1)
- **Innovative programs (3)** T=5
 - advocacy (1)
 - events and activities (1)
- **Treatment of clients (3)** T=3
- **Location (1)** T=1

THINGS TO IMPROVE ABOUT MFB

A random assortment of programmatic changes emerged when stakeholders were asked what things they would improve about MFB. They commented on “increasing hours of availability to serve the working poor,” “more advocacy and policy work to get at the root causes of hunger,” partnering with other organizations for fundraising,” “linking with the Montana Food Bank Network to help the community better understand the difference” between the two entities, creating a delivery service, and “paying employees market rate even if it means not delivering as much food. . . make sure you don’t perpetuate the cycle of poverty by not paying staff what they are worth.” As was true of other program stakeholders involved in the program evaluation, community representatives were in favor of a bigger facility: “Your location is not bad but I’m sure you could use more space.”

List 9.2: Things to Improve about MFB

- **Programmatic and/or administrative changes** T=9
 - increase hours for clients (3)
 - more advocacy and policy work (1)
 - partnerships for fundraising (1)
 - new services (1)
 - link with MFBN (1)
 - better staff wages and retirement plan (1)
 - encourage good nutrition (1)
- **Bigger facility (5)** T=6
 - better location (1)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUILDING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Community stakeholders were asked what their thoughts were regarding opportunities for building new partnerships with MFB. Although several respondents thought MFB had already “done an excellent job with collaborations and partnerships,” others recommended some new linkages with Montana Food Bank Network and with Missoula Urban Demonstration Project “to build skills and knowledge and provide access to tools and vehicles, which could be applied to increasing food security in Missoula.” Others suggested expanding partnerships with businesses to do food drives and “greater presence on policy issues and partnering with political groups on poverty and social justice initiatives.”

List 9.3: What opportunities exist for building new partnerships

- **Suggestions for new partnerships (7)** T=7
- **Already doing good job in this area (2)** T=2

MFB SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

All of the community stakeholders responded affirmatively to a question about whether they thought MFB serves the community in the best way it can did. They commented on MFB’s innovative programs, good visibility in the community, and the community partnerships that have been developed to foster MFB’s mission of feeding those in need. Several comments addressed the need for a larger facility and more open hours to provide increased food access to clients.

List 9.4: Does MFB serve the community in the best way it can? (9 yes, 2 not sure)

- **Innovative programs (2)** T=2
- **Good community outreach and visibility (2)** T=2
- **Could use larger space more hours (2)** T=2

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER FINDINGS

Community stakeholders were most satisfied with MFB’s ability to meet the community’s need for access to emergency food and also with other aspects of MFB most visible to the community. They expressed some dissatisfaction with the facility space in terms of its adequacy for the burgeoning need for food among community residents. Staff and volunteers were high on their list of “best things” because of their longevity with the organization and their outreach efforts in the community. Suggestions for improvement included adding more client hours to increase food access and to engage in more advocacy and policy work. Community stakeholders also thought MFB should expand its facility.

CHAPTER 10: SUMMARY OF CROSS-CUTTING THEMES AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY OF CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Given the considerable amount of information to digest in this report, an additional way to make sense of the data is to identify the common threads across program stakeholder groups. Although there was some variety in the questions asked of different groups, everyone commented about MFB's strengths and challenges. Connecting themes across stakeholder groups provides a way to reduce or distill huge amounts of data to get at what truly stands out for clients, volunteers, staff, the board of directors, donors and community stakeholders combined. What follows are highlights of the common themes that emerged with regularity across program stakeholder groups.

MFB'S CROSS-CUTTING STRENGTHS

The following key themes that cut across program stakeholder groups stand out as MFB's top ranking strengths or what program evaluation participants viewed as the "best things about MFB:"

- **Organizational culture of respect, acceptance, affirmation, and understanding.** By far the theme that was discussed the most concerned the culture of MFB and the respectful treatment of clients and volunteers. The culture of kindness and affirmation extended beyond clients and volunteers to encapsulate the ethos of MFB and it reflected how everyone was treated, congruent with one of the organization's guiding principles. Even those more removed from MFB's daily operations knew this to be true. It was also noted in stakeholder comments that the culture of respect filters through practices and policies at all levels of the organization. In this sense, MFB is a value driven organization where strategies and programs are developed based on their congruency with a belief system that embraces treating everyone as human beings.
- **Meeting the community's need for access to emergency food.** Program stakeholders, first and foremost, supported MFB's mission and were exceedingly impressed with MFB's ability to meet and often exceed expectations to provide community residents with access to emergency food. Fundraising and community outreach were key to success. However, significant components of meeting this goal included creating and nurturing the kind of climate where people feel less ashamed about asking for help and understand emergency food distribution not as a "hand-out but a hand up." Information was readily distributed by staff and volunteers about additional community resources.
- **Quality of the services.** All program stakeholders commented about the quality of MFB's services. Most of this discussion focused on the innovative programs created to provide nutritional assistance to children and the elderly. In other words, MFB's staff does not wait for people to come to them. They reach out to groups whose access may be compromised by disability, frailty, or vulnerability. Guided by the organization's culture of respect, staff members create services that make it easy for people to accept help. The innovative, cutting edge services developed help spread the message that community food insecurity is a problem we all own and

we all need to address. Quality of services as a theme also includes the well-run volunteer program where volunteers continue to donate their time because of the respectful treatment they receive from program staff and other volunteers. Again, it is difficult to separate out distinct themes when in actuality these overlap and inform one another. An organizational culture of respect underlies the formation and administration of program services and practice informed by clear and explicit values. This makes for quality service delivery.

MFB'S CROSS-CUTTING CHALLENGES

The two challenges listed below that resonated for all program stakeholder groups reflect less on any organizational weakness per se and more on environmental pressures (primarily economic and political) pushing on the organization from the outside. As more and more community residents find themselves in need of the Food Bank's services, the issues discussed below will become increasingly more intense.

- **Addressing facility issues.** Regardless of program stakeholders' "distance" from MFB, each group voiced concern about the size of the existing facility, the need for more space for clients in the waiting area and shopping aisles, and problems with parking. With the increase in emergency food services, especially over the last few years, a facility that at one time adequately supported the number of clients who came through the door on a daily basis no longer has the capacity to graciously meet clients' need for food access. A number of stakeholders predict that more and more people are likely to need MFB's services in the coming years due to economic hard times, increases in unemployment, loss of jobs, and political decisions that have eroded social service safety nets.
- **Increasing food access.** Every program stakeholder group discussed the need for more food to distribute and increasing clients' access by adding more shopping hours, increasing the number of times clients can visit the Food Bank on a monthly basis, and creating more Food Bank locations in town. Again, the issue of increasing food access ties into addressing facility issues. Neither can be discussed in isolation.

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

Without a doubt, Missoula Food Bank achieves its mission by responding to the emergency food needs of those who are hungry and it does so by adhering consistently and passionately to its guiding principles. Like so many other nonprofits in difficult economic times, pressures from outside the organization push for change. While the "end point" of the information contained in this report is meant to inform a strategic planning process in the ensuing months, listed below are some key points to consider sparked by the information contained in this report.²⁵

²⁵ Given the participatory nature of the program evaluation, recommendations based on the results should be a collective, collaborative effort. The key points to consider are just that....not recommendations but ideas to consider when crafting recommendations.

Retaining and Building on Organizational Strengths

Program evaluation findings and a fair proportion of program stakeholders' comments addressed MFB's unique organizational climate of respect, acceptance and affirmation. Without question this is one of the Food Bank's greatest strength that ought to be understood with better clarity in order to define best practices that other nonprofit organizations who work with people with limited access to resources could replicate. Local research completed on this topic indicates considerable barriers to food access located at the organizational level.²⁶ These include income eligibility requirements, "too much red tape" (too much paperwork), and long waiting lists for services. The key factor identified by clients that creates opportunities for food security, in both the research conducted and MFB's program evaluation results, was the respectful and considerate treatment they received from program staff and volunteers: "Life can change in an instant and no one wants to feel chastised for seeking help."²⁷ A program atmosphere of acceptance promotes food security.

The question this issue forces is, "How does Missoula Food Bank retain a climate of support and respect while at the same time needing to address issues that could compromise it?" When considering how to deal with increasing demands for services and the inadequacies of MFB's current facility to handle these demands, the unique climate at the Food Bank should factor in at the top of the list as a key element to preserve. Addressing food security is not simply about distributing food to those in need. It is also about the particular climate in which this occurs so the issue of climate or potential climate change needs to be a consideration in all decision making that follows.

Increasing Social Justice Work and Advocacy

Although not specifically written into MFB's mission statement, social justice and advocacy to address the root causes of hunger were paramount in the minds of many program stakeholders. Clients as well as board members thought it important to confront hunger at its foundation. Doing this means tackling some of the root causes of poverty and confronting discrimination, oppression and other institutional inequalities that pose barriers to food access. A key question that surfaces from this discussion and a challenge for organizational planning is "How does a food bank work to address food insecurity on multiple levels without becoming "too political" and risk losing many of its supporters and contributors?"²⁸ On the other hand, how can MFB fulfill a component of its mission statement to educate and empower individuals and families experiencing hunger to identify and alleviate the causes of hunger without engaging in a multi-leveled approach to address food insecurity? These are important discussion topics to struggle with during strategic planning.

Thinking Creatively about Collaborative Partnerships

Working together to address community issues is becoming increasingly necessary as funding cuts and funding proposals require nonprofits to move out of their silos and combine resources and expertise with other nonprofits or community groups. MFB is no stranger to collaboration as a way to fulfill one of its key promises – to respond to emergency food needs and reduce the incidence of

²⁶ See Jacobson, M. & Rugeley, C. (2007). *Food Insecurity in Missoula County: Barriers, Opportunities, and Solutions*. Missoula, MT: PRAXIS: Building Knowledge for Action.

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ During the facilitated conversation with board members this issue was mentioned.

hunger in the community. Collaboration is another one of MFB's strengths. MFB recognizes that one of the key approaches to addressing food insecurity is to help the community see we all share in the problem and its solution. Many of the partnerships currently established provide a means to distribute and/or acquire food, gain access to specific hard-to-reach populations, and attract funding and food donations.

As staff members pointed out during the partnership mapping exercise, new partnership possibilities include working with others in the community to create alternative approaches to food security such as skill building with clients around procurement, processing and preservation of food. Other possibilities included putting agricultural land into production specifically to meet the needs of the Food Bank for local produce and looking more broadly at food security within the community. Alternative approaches to food security are informed by social justice and advocacy. They address what can be done if everyone looks more strategically at the community food system as a whole.

Researching Food Bank Adaptations to the Current Economic Environment

The economic and political pulls and strains MFB is experiencing are being experienced by other food banks worldwide. While this fact provides little consolation, it does point out that creative solutions to address the need for increased emergency food services may be happening in other communities in the United States or somewhere else around the globe. As suggested at the board of directors' facilitated discussion, getting a sense of what is happening elsewhere is one of the first steps in strategic planning. For example, other countries whose underlying value systems support more collective responses to addressing social problems create programs geared toward viewing hunger as a socially created phenomenon rather than a problem of individual or familial failings.

One excellent example is The Stop, located in Toronto and one of Canada's first food banks. The Stop has evolved from a traditional food bank to a "thriving community hub where neighbors participate in a broad range of programs that provide healthy food, as well as foster social connection, build food skills and promote engagement in civic issues."²⁹ Its mission is to increase access to food in a manner that maintains dignity, builds health and community and challenges inequality. The Stop includes community kitchens, gardens, cooking classes, drop-in meals, perinatal support, a food bank, outdoor bake ovens, food markets and community advocacy. Like Missoula Food Bank, underlying all of The Stop's efforts is the view that food should be a basic human right. The Stop model deals with the complexities of food insecurity by widening the analysis and combining direct service with self-help, sustainability and advocacy. It brings social justice to the forefront in decision making about program and project development and it challenges the traditional food bank model based on charitable food distribution alone.³⁰

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is a formidable task to review the data gathered from 588 people and then condense and compile it and somehow not feel as though much good information still remains nested somewhere in the

²⁹ See The Stop's website located at www.thestop.org

³⁰ Levkoe, C. (2004). Widening the approach to food insecurity: The Stop Community Food Centre. *Canadian Review of Social Policy*, 52.

voluminous piles of notes, spreadsheets, tables, and transcripts. Nonetheless, the attempt here was to surface the key issues and at the same time, represent the voices of everyone who participated in helping Missoula Food Bank become a better program. The combined wisdom of people who know the Food Bank best, and who are willing to share that wisdom, is one of the program's greatest assets.

The aim of a program evaluation is to collect information from a variety of perspectives or viewpoints and to use it to make informed decisions about organizational change or what not to change. Evaluation is one of the key steps in a process of inquiry that organizations undertake when they want to learn about themselves. Although evaluation ought to be a common practice especially for nonprofits whose missions are to help people with limited access to resources and to do this in the best way possible, it happens rarely without coercion from outside funding sources. That said, organizations like Missoula Food Bank, who stick their necks out so to speak and open themselves up for review, are engaged in a learning process that enhances the organization's capacity to create. It does not get much better than this in the world of nonprofit organizations who must adapt to survive but who must be *learning organizations* to thrive.³¹

³¹ For a detailed description of learning organizations see Senge, P. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of Learning Organizations*. New York: Currency Doubleday, p. 14.