

FOODSHARE

FOOD PANTRY BEST PRACTICES

Scoring Guide

INTRODUCTION

This Guide should help you assign scores to your food pantry for each of the practices listed in the “Food Pantry Best Practices” Scoresheet which accompanies this document. While this is not an exact science, we are trying to achieve as much consistency as possible so that we can meaningfully recognize pantries that score the best.

Some of these practices will apply more to your specific situation, others less. We also recognize that *you* are the true experts in running food pantries – you, who are on the frontlines, fighting hunger and poverty in your communities everyday. Nevertheless, drawing on work from around the country and on input from you, our agencies, we present “Food Pantry Best Practices” to hopefully *advance the conversation* about what it means to: 1) provide food assistance in ways that put clients’ needs first; and 2) address, as best you can, the underlying causes of this need for assistance.

SCORING

In each of the following pages, describe your current practice and then select the number 0 – 10 that you feel best represents it. The examples provided under each practice are meant only to be a guide. Your current practice may not coincide with any of these examples.

Record and total your scores on the one-page Scoresheet that accompanies this document. While 100 is a perfect score, don’t be concerned if your result is in the 50’s, 40’s or even lower! You may have scored well in one practice but never allocated resources to address another. Again, our goal here is to raise awareness and advance the conversation about how best to assist persons in need.

We look forward to engaging with you in this conversation and working to achieve real results in our communities. Thank you for all the great work you do!

CLIENT CHOICE

Research has shown that up to 50% of the food in pre-packed bags from a pantry may be wasted due to clients having no interest or use for it. By letting clients select what items they want from the full variety in your pantry, you not only minimize waste but empower clients.

- 0 — A pre-packed bag of food is provided to clients.
- 1 —
- 2 —
- 3 — A "swap table" is available for clients to trade items they do not want.
- 4 —
- 5 — Clients may request items and receive them if available at the pantry.
- 6 —
- 7 —
- 8 — In addition to receiving a pre-packed bag of food, clients may also choose
from other items available at the pantry.
- 9 —
- 10 — Clients choose from the full variety of items available at the pantry.

✓ Describe your current practice:

✓ Circle the number above where you feel your current practice best fits. Write this number on the Scoresheet which accompanies this Guide.

✓ Do you wish to improve on your current practice? If so, how and what challenges do you foresee?

CLIENTS RECEIVE AS MUCH FOOD AS NEEDED

This practice may be the most difficult for pantries to accept and implement. Most pantries agree, however, that *trusting clients* creates a more dignifying and empowering experience for them. Some work has even indicated that allowing clients to take as much food as they feel they need often leads to them not taking enough!

- 0 Clients receive a preset amount of food regardless of their need or household size.
- 1
- 2
- 3 Clients receive a preset amount of food based on their household size.
- 4
- 5
- 6 Clients receive a preset amount of food based on their household size, but are allowed to take additional items on a case-by-case basis.
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 Clients are allowed to take as much food as they feel they need.

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CLIENTS VISIT AS OFTEN AS NEEDED

Client emergencies know no schedule! Even in the absence of an emergency, clients themselves are in the best position to know how to balance addressing their food needs with their other needs for housing, healthcare, daycare, etc.

- 0 — Clients receive food less than monthly.
- 1 —
- 2 — Clients can receive food on a monthly basis.
- 3 —
- 4 — Clients can receive food on a monthly and emergency basis.
- 5 —
- 6 — Clients can receive food up to every two weeks and on an emergency basis.
- 7 —
- 8 — Clients can receive food weekly and on an emergency basis.
- 9 —
- 10 — Clients can receive food as often as they need it.

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NON-TRADITIONAL HOURS

The “working poor” are often clients of a food pantry particularly during difficult economic times. To best reach this group, pantries should consider remaining open beyond normal workday hours. Pantries may further extend their availability by offering clients delivery or “by appointment” options.

- 0 — The pantry is never open evenings or weekends.
- 1 —
- 2 —
- 3 — The pantry is open one evening or weekend a month.
- 4 —
- 5 —
- 6 — The pantry is open one evening each week or on the weekends. The pantry
- 7 — also accepts clients by appointment.
- 8 —
- 9 — The pantry is open at least one evening each week as well as on the
- 10 — weekends. The pantry also accepts clients by appointment and provides deliveries.

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RESPECTFUL AND DIGNIFIED CLIENT INTAKE

Research has suggested that up to 40% of potential pantry clients will do without rather than submit to a difficult screening process. Screening is also labor and time intensive for you. Trust your clients to sign a basic "Statement of Income/Need" and you will not only welcome them but also stretch your limited resources.

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 0 | ..... | A detailed intake form must be completed that includes supporting documentation. Information is independently verified by the pantry before a client can begin receiving food. |
| 1 | | |
| 2 | | |
| 3 | ..... | Basic information is required: name, town of residence, household size and a signed Statement of Need. Documentation verifying name and address is required, but documentation of financial need is not. |
| 4 | | |
| 5 | | |
| 6 | | |
| 7 | ..... | Basic information is required: name, town of residence, household size and a signed Statement of Need. Supporting documentation is not required. |
| 8 | | |
| 9 | | |
| 10 | | Basic information is requested but not required. For government commodity distributions (e.g. TEFAP, FEMA), a client's household size and/or signed Statement of Income/Need may be necessary. |

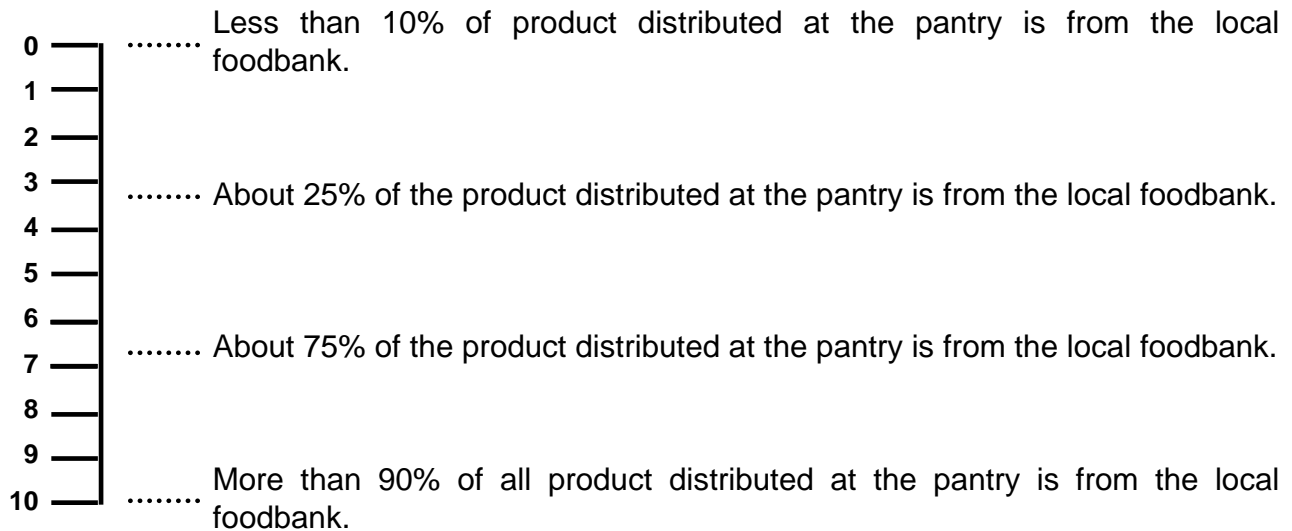
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USE OF FOODBANK PRODUCT

When a donor gives your pantry \$10 worth of purchased product (roughly 5 pounds of food), you gratefully accept it. If that same donor gave you \$10 cash, however, you could go to Foodshare and acquire nearly 60 pounds of food. This donor would also be eligible for a tax deduction! Use of foodbank product can mean a tenfold or more increase in the amount of food on your pantry's shelves.



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HEALTHY FOODS

Fresh fruits and vegetables, meat and dairy products are among the most expensive at a grocery store. These products can also present quite a challenge for a food pantry to acquire and adequately store. If your pantry has limited cold storage capacity for perishables, donors are often willing to help you expand it in order to give your clients more access to these healthy foods.

0	.....	Only canned goods and other non-perishable items are available to clients.
1		
2		
3	.....	Some combination of fresh fruits and vegetables, meats and/or dairy products are occasionally available to clients on a first-come, first-serve basis.
4		
5		
6		
7	.....	Some combination of fresh fruits and vegetables, meats and/or dairy products are regularly available to clients.
8		
9		
10	Fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, and dairy products are always available to clients.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR SERVICES

A client coming to your pantry for food represents an opportunity to discuss what other information or services might help with the underlying challenges that he or she faces. Remember the old adage, "Give someone a fish, they eat for a day. Teach someone how to fish, they can eat for the rest of their lives".

- 0 — No information or services are provided other than food.
- 1 —
- 2 — Flyers, brochures or other informational material are displayed on a table or
3 — in a rack for clients to read and, if interested, take.
- 4 —
- 5 — A worker from another agency occasionally sits in the pantry and meets with
6 — clients who are interested in the agency's services.
- 7 — Clients are connected with a case manager at the pantry who actively seeks
8 — and connects clients with useful information or services.
- 9 —
- 10 — Services in addition to food assistance are delivered on-site at the pantry on
a regular basis.

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COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

There is strength in numbers! Being aware of and collaborating with other service providers in your community will help build a stronger, more seamless *social fabric* to support your food pantry clients.

0	.....	Pantry has minimal awareness of and communication with other social service agencies in the community.
1		
2		
3	.....	Maintains current information on other agencies working in the community that includes hours of operation and location, key personnel and services provided.
4		
5		
6		
7	.....	Regularly meets with other agencies, attends board meetings, and has an ongoing focus of building cross-agency relationships.
8		
9		
10	Regularly networks with other agencies to collaborate on projects, share resources and, when appropriate, communicate regarding services delivered to particular clients.

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ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

What a little information can do! Helping elected officials and the broader public understand and care about the work of your food pantry can unleash their energies and passion in the fight against hunger and poverty in your community.

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 0 | ..... | No effort is made to apprise government officials of the pantry's work or concerns. The pantry's hours of operation and location are not widely known beyond those most familiar with such services. |
| 1 | | |
| 2 | | |
| 3 | ..... | The pantry sends informational updates annually to key government officials. Information on the pantry's hours of operation, location and basic mission are occasionally distributed in the community. |
| 4 | | |
| 5 | | |
| 6 | | |
| 7 | ..... | The pantry sends informational updates quarterly to key government officials. Information on the pantry's hours of operation, location and basic mission are regularly distributed in the community. |
| 8 | | |
| 9 | | |
| 10 | | The pantry is involved year-round in raising public awareness about their mission, the causes of hunger, and the need for reform and resources. Invites local and state representatives to tour or volunteer at the pantry. Uses print, audio, and visual media to promote advocacy. |

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