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Evaluation of the Capacity Building Grant for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts

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Evaluation of the Capacity Building Grant for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts

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I. Executive Summary

The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts strives to eliminate hunger in the region by providing resources and food donations to member agencies. In response to a lack of capacity in many of these agencies, the Food Bank established a capacity building grant in 2012 to assist in providing items such as freezers, refrigerators and computers along with many other possible options. The Food Bank collaborated with a graduate student research team at the University of Massachusetts Amherst to provide an evaluation of the program in order to assess the success of the grant and to find further ways to improve member agencies.

By conducting focus groups, implementing telephone surveys and by visiting one of the agencies, the research team was able to provide a comprehensive analysis of the member agencies in Hampden County, as this is the region that has the greatest need for increased food distribution. By comparing self-reported results of goals and results, the team was able to conclude that the capacity building grant was successful. In addition to gathering information on goals and results, the team also compared the pounds of food distributed prior to the grant with self-reported data after the grant was received. This information reveals an increase in food distributed, which can indicate the success of the grant. Overall, the agencies were extremely satisfied with the grant and would apply again.

In addition to gathering information on the grant, the team also focused on the actual grant process and gathered feedback on what the Food Bank can do to improve the process for all involved. Overall, the agencies were satisfied with the grant process and have provided feedback on anything that the Food Bank can do to improve the process.

Finally, the team gathered information on future goals and aspirations of the agencies in order to discover what the Food Bank can further to do help. Most agencies are seeking future financial support, both in terms of infrastructure and in terms of service. By providing data on the utility of certain items requested and breaking down the success of the grant, the information provided can be crucial in aiding the fight against hunger in western Massachusetts.

II. Introduction:

i. Need for Capacity Building in Western Massachusetts

Poverty and homelessness in the United States are major issues and continue to find their way on the policy-making agenda. The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts has been committed to alleviating and preventing hunger in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire Counties since 1982. In the region, one in eight people suffers from chronic food shortages and/or needs emergency food assistance (Food Bank). The Food Bank partners with and supports 300 member agencies that run meal sites, food pantries, homeless shelters, child-care centers and programs for the elderly. A main objective of the Food Bank is to distribute food to these agencies, and each year the organization distributes more than six millions pounds of food (Food Bank About Us). The limitation in member agencies abilities to store and handle the distributed food has prompted the Food Bank to establish a Network Capacity Building Department.

In western Massachusetts, especially Hampden County, there has been extensive growth in the development of multiple food pantries, shelters, and soup kitchens, which are partially funded by the Food Bank. Hampden County is the most urban area in western Massachusetts, is located in the Pioneer Valley and is home to 463,490 residents according to the 2013 U.S. Census (U.S. Census 2014). The county is also part of the Springfield Metropolitan Statistical Area. To accommodate the needs of residents facing food shortages in western Massachusetts, and in particular in Hampden County, the Food Bank has developed a capacity building grant to provide financial compensation to allow food pantries, shelters, and soup kitchens to operate. Particular points of interest for the Food Bank is to allow these agencies to serve fresh food and healthy food and provide additional services and benefits such as Wraparound Services, which can include nutrition classes and GED preparation. Agencies that apply for the grant can request items to increase their food distribution capacity.

ii. Capacity Building Grant and Process

Since the establishment of the grant in 2012, the Food Bank has given out 56 grants that have totaled \$171,000. Each grant awarded can be up to \$5,000 dollars per application, so organizations can request up to that amount for items that will help them operate more effectively and efficiently. The grant process requires a two-page application that the agencies

fill out in order to explain why they need the grant and what they seek to purchase with the grant. Successful applications include quotes from outside vendors or pictures of items they intend to purchase. Some agencies may have a difficult time applying for the grant due to factors such as language barriers or not being aware of the various grants and services that the Food Bank offers. To address this issue, the Food Bank is seeking to continue and develop initiatives to assist individuals who may have a hard time applying for the grant.

III. Evaluation of the Grant Program

i. Motivation and purpose

There is a growing need for food security initiatives both in western Massachusetts and throughout the country. Feeding America's 2009 research brief, *Food Banks: Hunger's New Staple*, details that a majority of clients within the Feeding America network "are not visiting "emergency" food assistance programs, such as food pantries, for temporary relief" (Feeding America Report 2009, p. 7). Instead, households are accessing these food pantries as a consistent food source. According to the study, about 76% of pantry client households served are food insecure, which is defined as "a lack of access, at times, to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life for all household members" (Feeding America Report 2009, p. 12). Due to the increased use of emergency shelters and severe food insecurity facing western Massachusetts, the Food Bank has taken the lead in helping member agencies serve their clients.

The capacity building grant is a part of the Network Capacity Building program that the Food Bank established, which is modeled after a prior successful program, called Target: Hunger. Target: Hunger was launched in the northern Berkshires of Massachusetts and in Springfield between 2005 and 2006. The overall mission of the project is to "reduce hunger and increase food security" by "working to build resources, capacity, and services while creating broad community wide networks for long-term food security" (Food Bank Target: Hunger). With the underlying belief that hunger is preventable, this program encourages collaboration between agencies and other critical community members, including social service agencies, farmers, students, communities of faith, government officials, statewide anti-hunger agencies and people personally affected by food insecurity (Food Bank Target: Hunger).

For the 2010 initiative, which focuses specifically on building capacity, the mission is to increase the effectiveness of resources available to vulnerable households in order to help them achieve greater food self-sufficiency (Food Bank Network Capacity Building). Main goals of the program include working with emergency food assistance agencies in each county to assess capacity needs, offer capacity building opportunities and to develop networks of emergency food providers. The capacity building grant that our team evaluated fits into this initiative with the objective of building self-sufficiency for clients.

ii. Research Questions

The objectives of the Food Bank in our evaluation are to discover the return on the investment in these grants. The main questions include:

1. Have they accomplished the goal of helping agencies move more food (especially fresh food) to more people?
2. If not, how could the Food Bank change the process to make it more likely to achieve this goal?
3. What else can the Food Bank do to increase capacity and efficacy for member agencies?

IV. Methodology

i. Evaluation Design

Our evaluation is a mixed-methods design based primarily on the Terms of Reference agreed upon between our student team, our faculty advisor Marta Vicarelli and the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. Our evaluation methodology includes the following steps:

1. Design and conduct focus groups from agencies.
2. Using results from focus groups, design a survey to collect information from agencies.
3. Implement survey to collect information from agencies.
4. Analyze results to quantifying the return on investment for the capacity building grants.
5. Provide additional qualitative information that will inform the granting process from focus groups, surveys and a field visit.
6. Generate a set of recommendations of ways to make the process and capacity building effort as effective as possible.

By crafting a problem definition sheet (Appendix A), our team was able to get a grasp of what the Food Bank wanted from the project. The key evaluation question at the core of our analysis is “Is the capacity building grant successful?”. We used the criteria of moving more food and moving more healthy food as the standard for success.

ii. Selection of Agencies

Our evaluation focused on the member agencies of the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts in Hampden County, Massachusetts. We divided the 71 agencies in Hampden County in three categories below.

1. Agencies that applied for the capacity building grant and received it.
2. Agencies that applied for the capacity building grant and did not receive it.
3. Agencies that did not apply for the capacity building grant.

The goal of the Food Bank is to evaluate the return to investment from agencies that received the grant. First, our team conducted exploratory telephone focus groups contacting agencies from each category to gather qualitative general information on the grant process and their experience (Appendix B). We then used the results of the focus groups interviews to design more precise survey questions targeting only agencies that received the grant, which are 26 in total. The purpose of our final survey was to assess how efficient the grant program has been so far. The survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix C. We were able to reach 21 out of the 26 agencies in our sample, and conducted the final survey with 19 of these agencies. The two agencies that we were unable to survey had a change in management and/or were not able to provide information about the capacity building grant. This left us with the 19 agencies with which to conduct the final telephone survey.

iii. Quantitative Analysis

The survey results have been coded and entered in a database to perform statistical analysis. The survey explores three main areas: the difficulty of the grant process (Appendix C, Question 1), the goals and motivations of agencies that applied to the grant (Appendix C, Question 8), and metrics to assess the success of the grant (Appendix C, Question 11). We also verified with agencies background information such as number of staff, number of volunteers, pounds of food distributed and other measures (Appendix C, Question 1), which are indispensable variables to

assess agencies' size and resources. Our team utilized the Statistics and Data Analysis program STATA along with Excel.

iv. Qualitative Analysis

For our mixed-methods approach, we also utilized qualitative information from the final survey and from the focus groups. We asked for feedback of agencies on whether they would reapply for the grant (Appendix C, Question 4), whether they wished that had applied for a different item (Appendix C, Question 12) and any recommendations that agencies had for the Food Bank in regards to the grant process (Appendix C, Question 17).

v. Limitations

Our time constraints and the limited number of surveyors (the three of us and one volunteer) prevented our team from contacting every agency in Hampden County and forced us to narrow the scope of our evaluation only to agencies that applied for the grant and received it. Had we been able to reach all the agencies we would have been able to provide insights on the challenges faced by agencies that did not apply to the grant at all, or that applied but did not received it. Below we present the results of our analysis.

V. Findings and Analysis

i. Background of Agencies

The research team compiled information on the types of agencies that are in Hampden County and their existing resources, the success of the grant itself, feedback on the grant process and future financial goals and aspirations of the agencies. To begin our analysis, we first had to differentiate the types of programs offered by agencies with the types of services that they offered. Of the 19 agencies we surveyed, we can see in Figure 1 that 16 of the agencies that we contacted have programs that are pantries, meaning that they give out food to clients. Three agencies are both a pantry and soup kitchen, meaning that in addition to giving out food they also serve at least one hot meal a day to clients. We also contacted three agencies that only had a

shelter program (in which clients can stay overnight) discovering that while two of the shelters do distribute food, one does not. One agency surveyed provides all three programs.

In addition to looking at the types of programs that agencies offer, we were also curious to find out the types of services that are available in the programs. Figure 2 reveals this information, showing that 14 agencies are accessible to wheelchairs and strollers. However, the field visit to an agency that is not wheelchair accessible helped inform us that volunteers and employees will go to great strides to provide food to those who are not able to enter the building. This includes bringing out food to the client's car or arranging a drop off if the client cannot leave the house. This is particularly relevant to elderly and disabled clients.

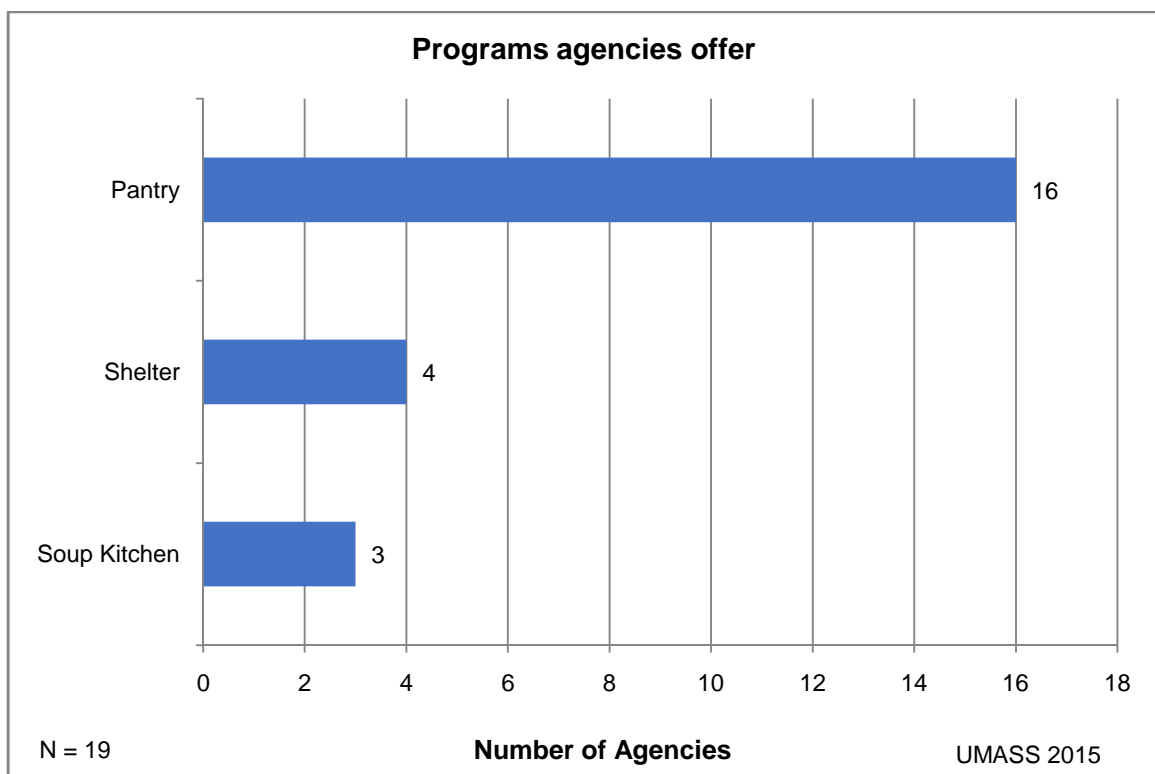


Figure 1: graph showing the different types of programs agencies offer to clients.

Continuing to look at Figure 2, we can see that the majority of agencies limit how many times a month clients can come in to receive food. It is important to note that most agencies that limit visits will make exceptions if it is an emergency or if the client has run out of food. Eight agencies have at least a partial client choice model, meaning that clients can choose what food that they will take home and eight agencies also provide Wraparound Services. These Wraparound Services can range from having a nutritionist provide nutrition classes to offering

cooking classes and assistance in navigating paying a client’s bills. It is important to note that most agencies that were contacted are operated by churches and that these Wraparound Services are often provided by the church itself. Only six of the agencies are open on weekends, which can often be the only time that a client who works during the week can come in to receive food.

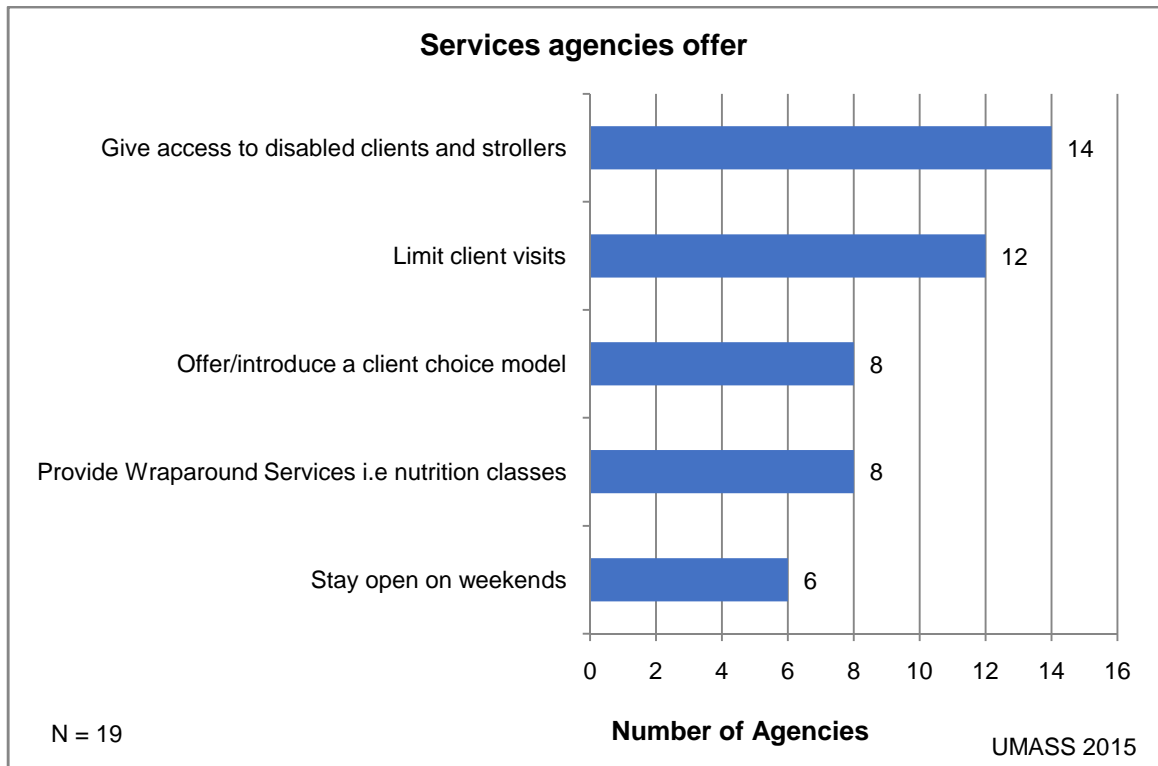


Figure 2: graph showing the different services the agencies offer their clients.

In addition to looking at the services that each of the agencies offer, it was also important to make discoveries on the details of operations such as the amount spent each month to run the agency, the number of clients that come in to the agency each month and the percentage of healthy food that is being distributed. Figure 3 breaks this information down in averages between all the agencies, excluding two large agencies that are outliers in our analysis¹. These numbers show the limited amount of employees and volunteers in the agencies compared to the amount of food that must be distributed to a large amount of clients.

¹(Footnote 1) Two agencies require more than \$1,00,000 to operate and report very few employees. As these are the agencies that the volunteer complete the survey for we believe that there was a misinterpretation and how these specific questions from Figure 3 were asked.

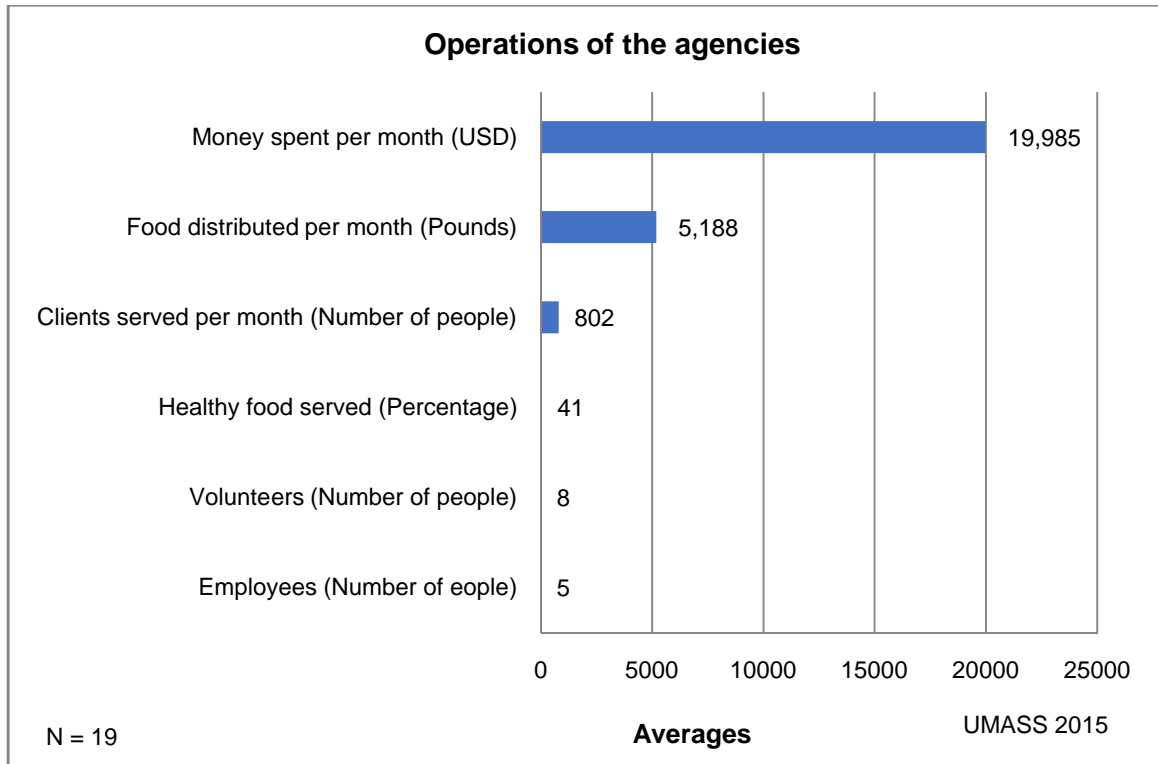


Figure 3: key figures of the 19 agencies in our sample.

Once we discovered critical pieces of information on the background of agencies, the team went on to confirm information from the grant applications with the agencies. Figure 4 shows the breakdown of what year agencies applied for the grant. Several agencies applied multiple years, some receiving the grant more than once. We confirmed that eight agencies applied in 2012, only three applied in 2013, and eight applied again in 2014.

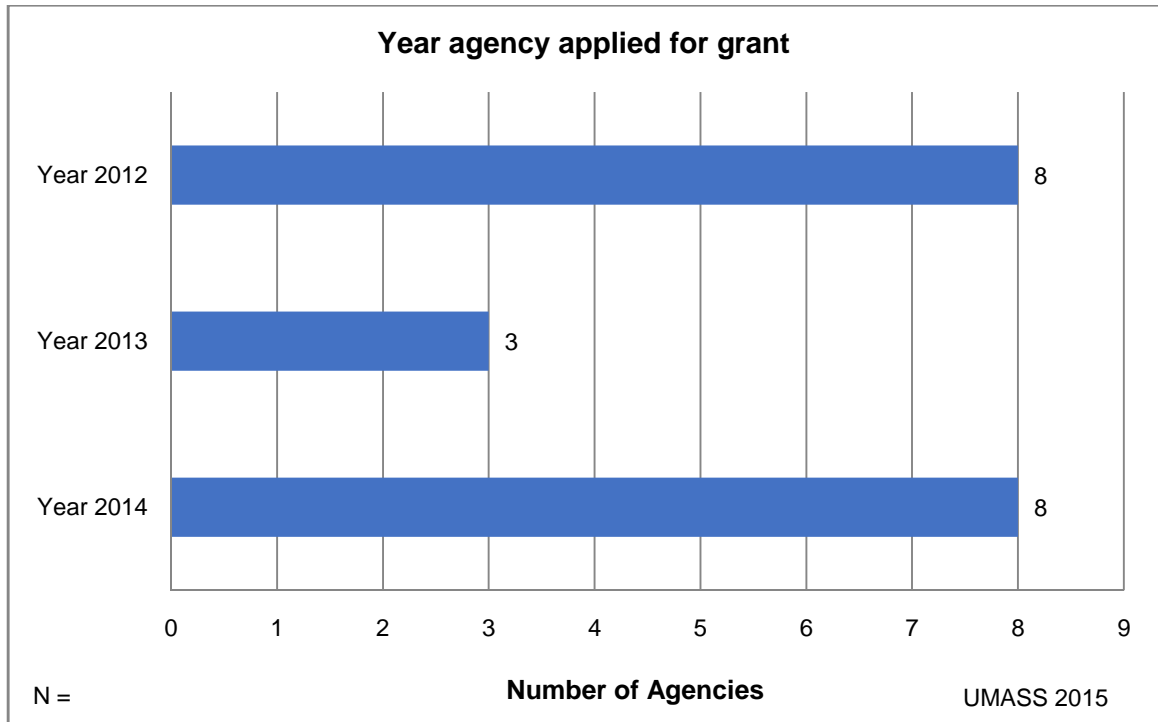


Figure 4: number of times agencies applied for the grant in the past three years.

ii. Grant outcomes

After confirming the years that agencies applied, it was important to confirm the items that the agencies requested in order to track which items were most needed. Figure 5 reveals the breakdown of items requested by year. The item that has been requested the most by agencies is a freezer. In 2014, seven agencies requested a freezer, however only two agencies requested a freezer in 2013 and three agencies requested one in 2012. Looking at Figure 5 also shows that refrigerators are currently the second most popular item requested. Five agencies requested fridges in 2012 and 2014, while only three agencies requested one in 2013. Overall refrigerators and freezers were the most requested items through the capacity building grant. This can indicate that agencies are focusing more on providing fresh and healthy food to their clients, rather than produce that can be stored in cans.

Other items were also requested to help with operations. Figure 5 shows that four agencies requested a computer in 2014, while only one agency asked for a computer in 2013. This can indicate that technology is becoming more prevalent and necessary for agencies to keep track of operations. In 2013 and 2014 three agencies applied for storage. Kitchen appliances, ranging from sinks and stoves to pots, pans and plates and silverware were also requested in

2014 and 2013 by three agencies. Two agencies also applied for ramps to offer access to wheelchairs and strollers in 2014. This low number correlates to the fact that 14 of the agencies that we surveyed already have ramps to provide access to disabled clients. Other items that were requested included utensils such as dollies or chairs, and funds to purchase tables.

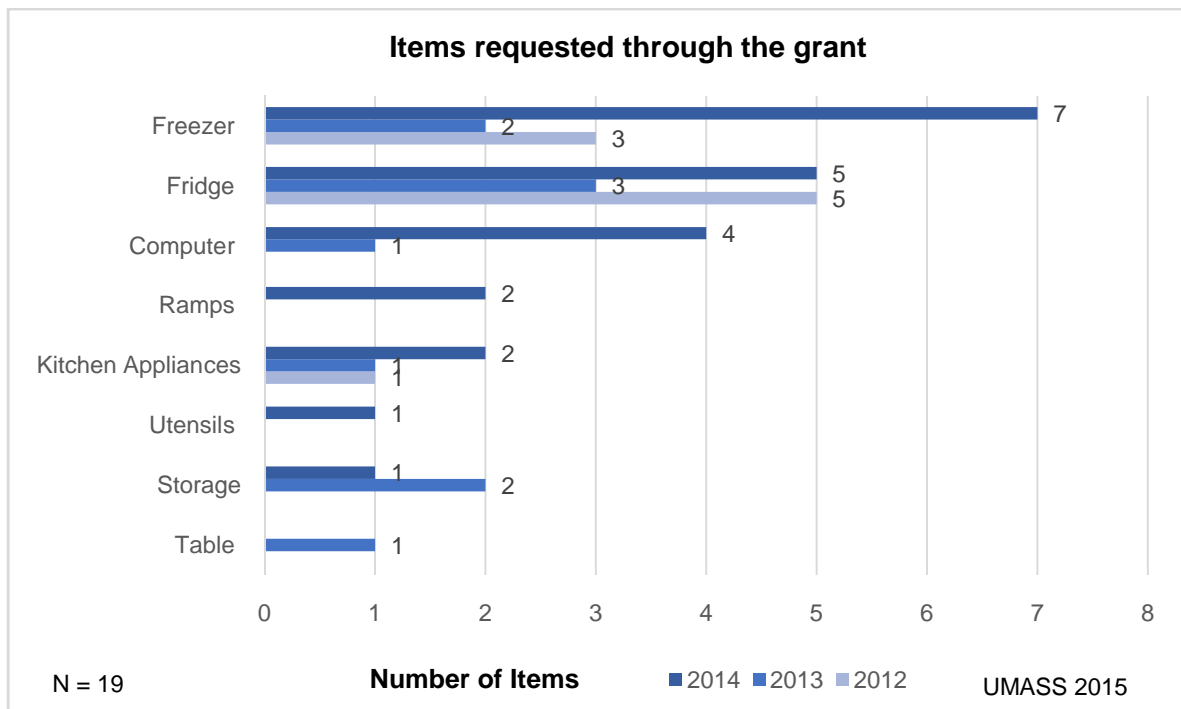


Figure 5: items that agencies applied for through the capacity building grant.

We then asked agencies what their goal in applying for the grant was. While this information is also available in their application, we wanted to confirm that this was accurate. We also asked them if they achieved that goal (Result) after receiving the grant (Figure 6). We provided the same following categories for both Goals and Results, and asked agencies to check all that applied:

1. serve more people
2. offer more fresh food
3. offer more food per person
4. reduce waste
5. provide wraparound services
6. give access to disable clients and strollers

7. offer client choice
8. provide longer opening hours

Figure 6 reveals that the Goal achieved by most agencies is serving more people and offering more fresh food. 16 agencies planned to offer more fresh food and were able to do it, thanks to fridges and freezers. 16 agencies attempted to serve more people through the grant, and 17 agencies reached that goal. Hence, one agency experienced an unexpected benefit. Indeed, in several cases results exceeded original goals. 12 agencies were able to offer more food per person, while only 11 agencies had planned on this. The same can be said for reducing waste, which happened in 12 agencies and was only planned in 11. Three agencies were able to provide longer opening hours while only two agencies had planned for this.

Moreover, Figure 6 shows that four agencies had planned to give access to wheelchairs, strollers and disabled people and managed to do so. As mentioned above, six agencies had planned to offer Wraparound Services, but only four succeeded. Two agencies were able to implement a client choice model, however most other agencies already offer a client choice model. Therefore, this was not a goal for these agencies.

Overall, the outcomes are very positive. Most agencies were able to fulfill their goals. Only two agencies were unable to implement Wraparound Services and only one agency failed to introduce the client choice system.

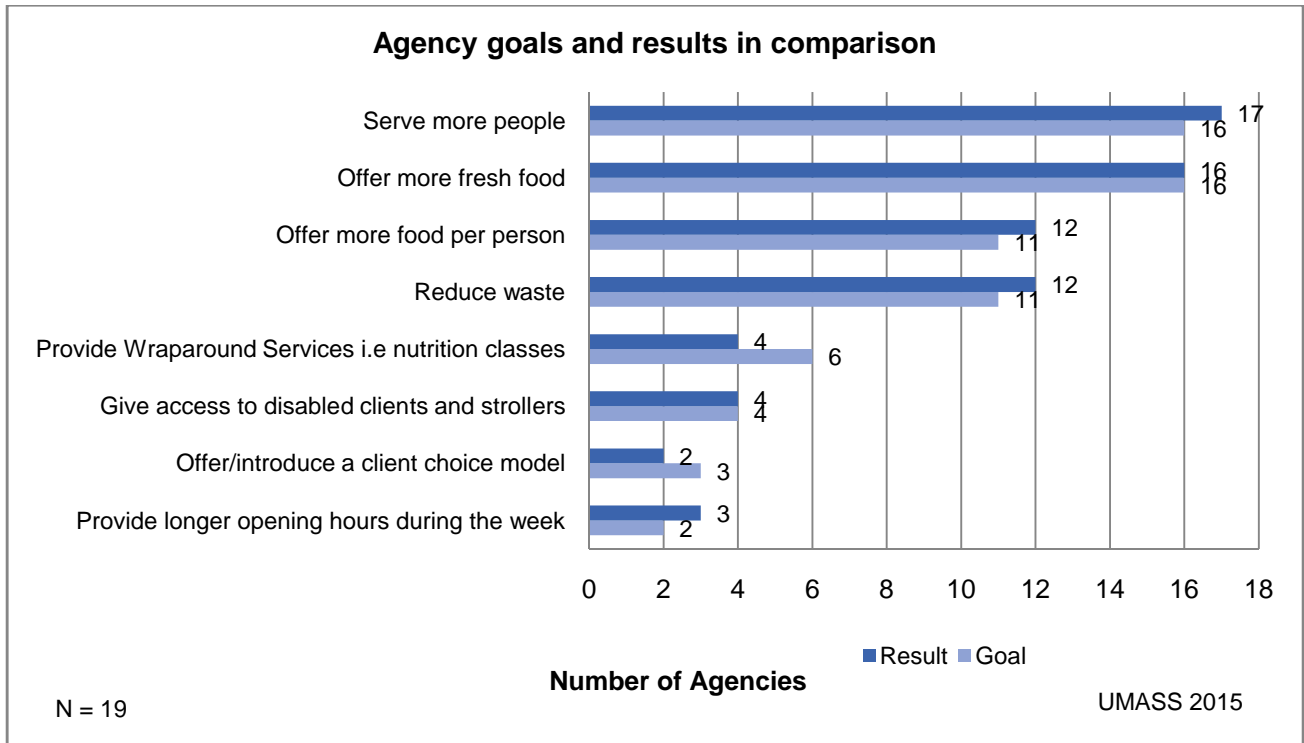


Figure 6: comparison between the original goals agencies reported when applying for the grant and the actual (self-reported) results achieved after receiving the grant.

We also asked agencies if they experienced additional benefits and if their results exceeded their expectations. Figure 7 reveals these benefits that were beyond the original goal. Six agencies were able to serve more people than they had planned while five agencies were able to offer more fresh food and more food per person. Four agencies were able to provide Wraparound Services when they did not expect to do so, and three agencies were able to provide additional longer opening hours to clients. Three agencies said they were able to give access to disabled clients, while two agencies were able to reduce waste on top of their planned goals. One agency could extend their opening hours to the weekend, which is an additional success.

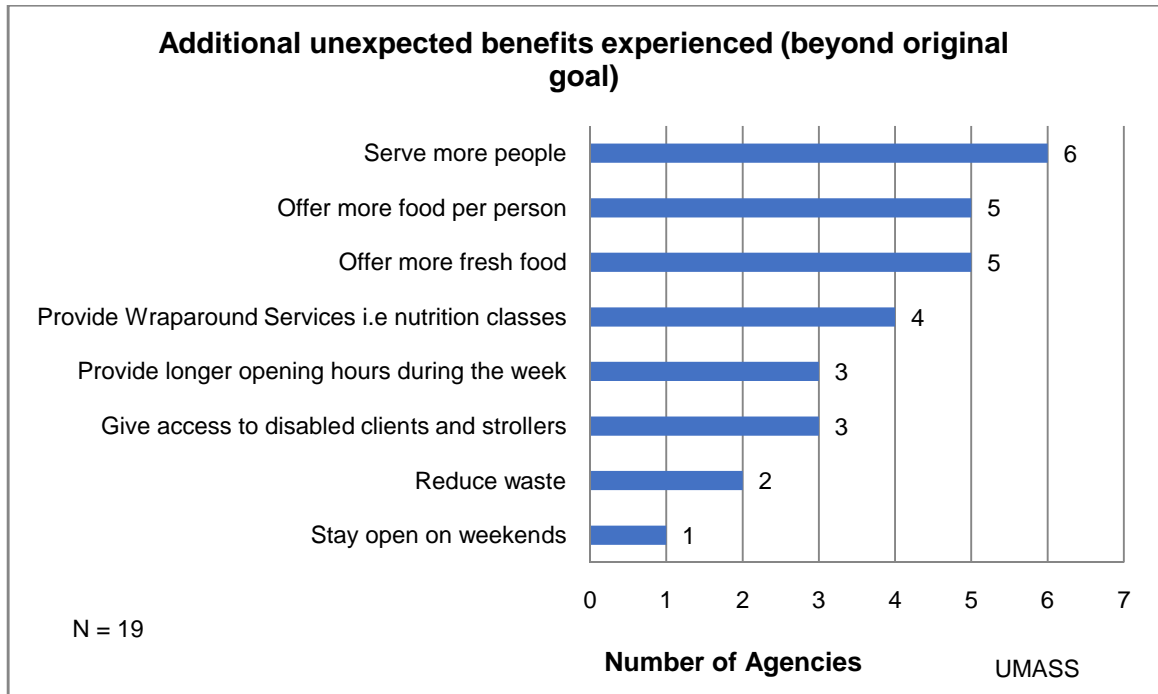


Figure 7: number of agencies that experienced unexpected additional benefits because of the items they acquired through the grant.

We have provided a comparative chart in Figure 8 that incorporates the results of Figure 6 and Figure 7. It summarizes by number of agencies: (i) the self-reported goal (Goal) that originally motivated the grant application; (ii) the self reported results (Results) results (i.e. how many agencies completed their goals); additional benefits generated by the grant (number of agencies for which the outcome was an unexpected benefits). We can see that serving more people, offering more fresh food and providing more food per person were the most often accomplished additional goals. On the other hand, providing longer opening hours during the week and staying open was lower on the achievement list, as most agencies need more volunteers and full-time staff rather than additional funding to be able to offer longer opening hours.

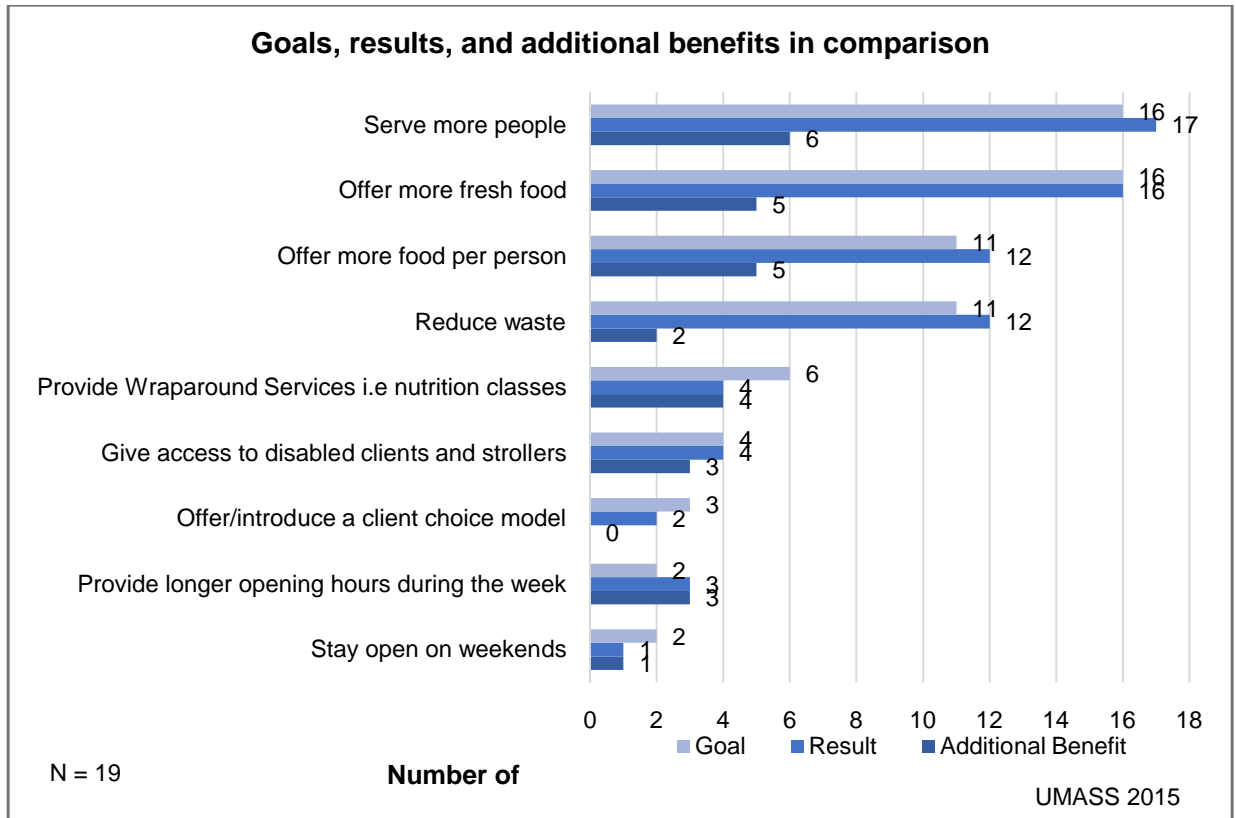


Figure 8: comparative chart showing (for each item agencies applied for and received) the (i) original goals, (ii) actual results, and (iii) additional benefits in services.

In addition to comparing the overall success of the grant, we found it important to show the utility of the most requested individual items. Figure 9 shows the ways that only agencies that requested a fridge were able to improve their agency's operations. We can see that 13 agencies were able to offer more fresh food when they wanted to do so and 11 agencies were able to serve more people when only 10 requested to do so. In all other categories, the Result met or exceeded the Goal, other than in the cases of staying open on weekends, providing Wraparound Services and offering client choice.

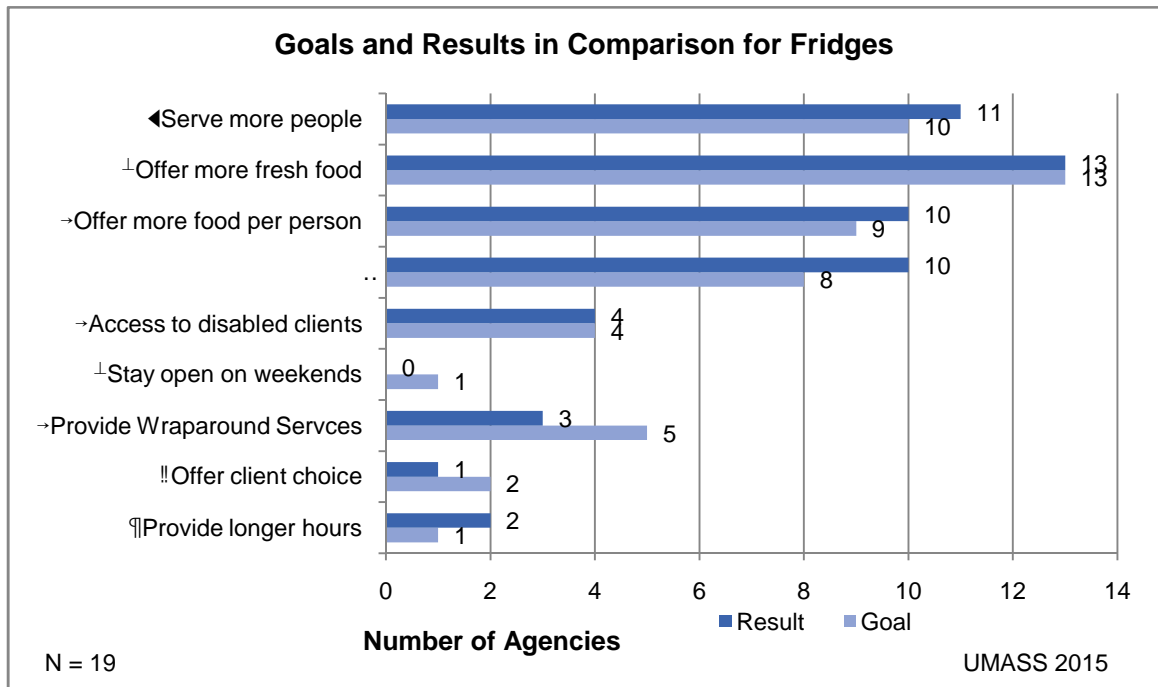


Figure 9: comparative chart showing the original goals and actual results in services achieved by agencies that requested a fridge through the grant.

Figure 10 reveals the results and goals of the agencies that requested a freezer through their capacity building grant. Of the 11 agencies we surveyed who requested a freezer, all 11 agencies served more people and 10 agencies offered more fresh food to clients because of the freezer. Six agencies were able to offer more food per person through having obtained a freezer.

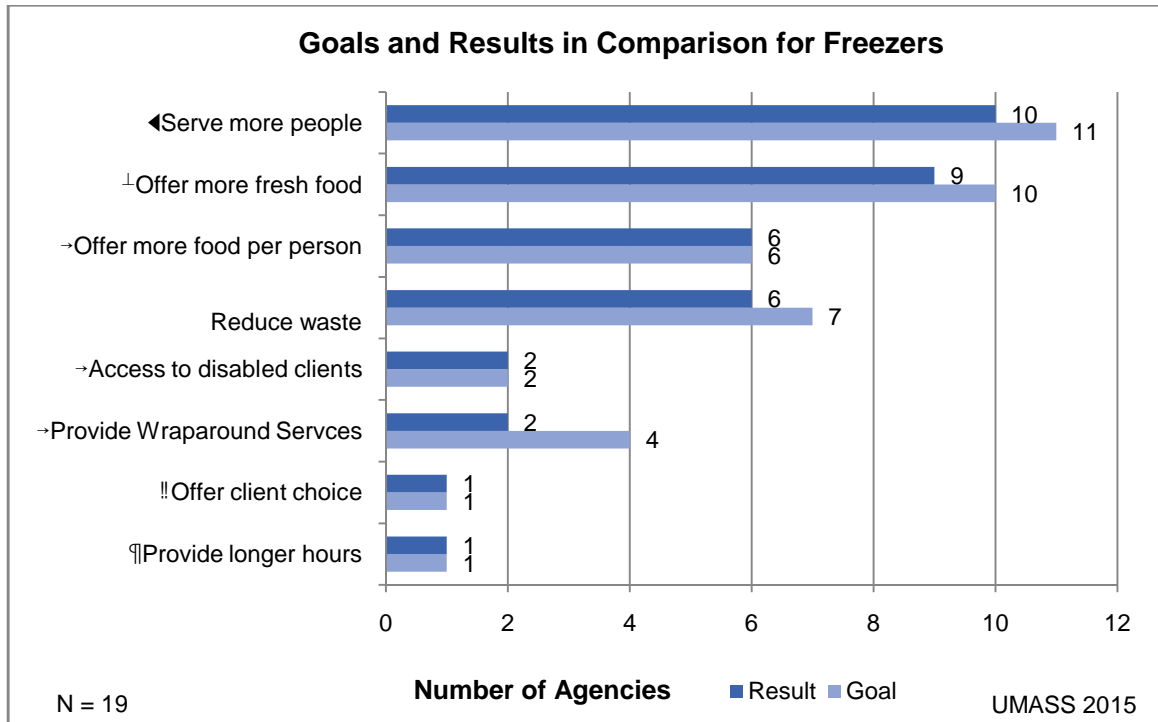


Figure 10: comparative chart showing the original goals and actual results in services achieved by agencies that requested a freezer through the grant.

Figure 11 shows agencies that requested a computer and how computers improved how many clients agencies can serve. This can indicate that agencies can better track their client visits and improve their operations. Of the individual items, computers were the most successful. Only one agency did not meet its goal from receiving a computer in providing additional Wraparound Services, but every other goal was met or exceeded including serving more people, offering more fresh food and reducing waste.

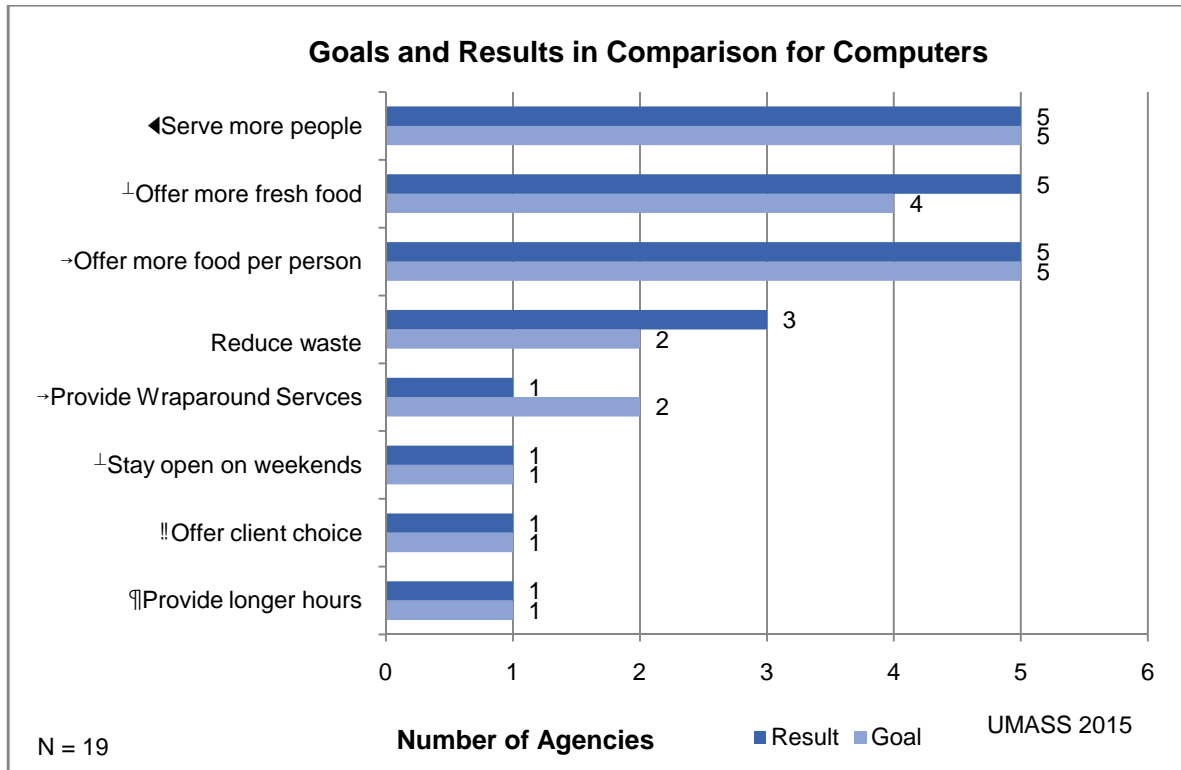


Figure 11: comparative chart showing the original goals and actual results in services achieved by agencies that requested a computer through the grant.

One of the items that is less successful in serving more people and offering more fresh food is storage. Figure 12 reveals that the result fell short in serving more people and offering more fresh food, however all agencies that requested storage were able to offer more food per person, reduce waste and provide Wraparound Services.

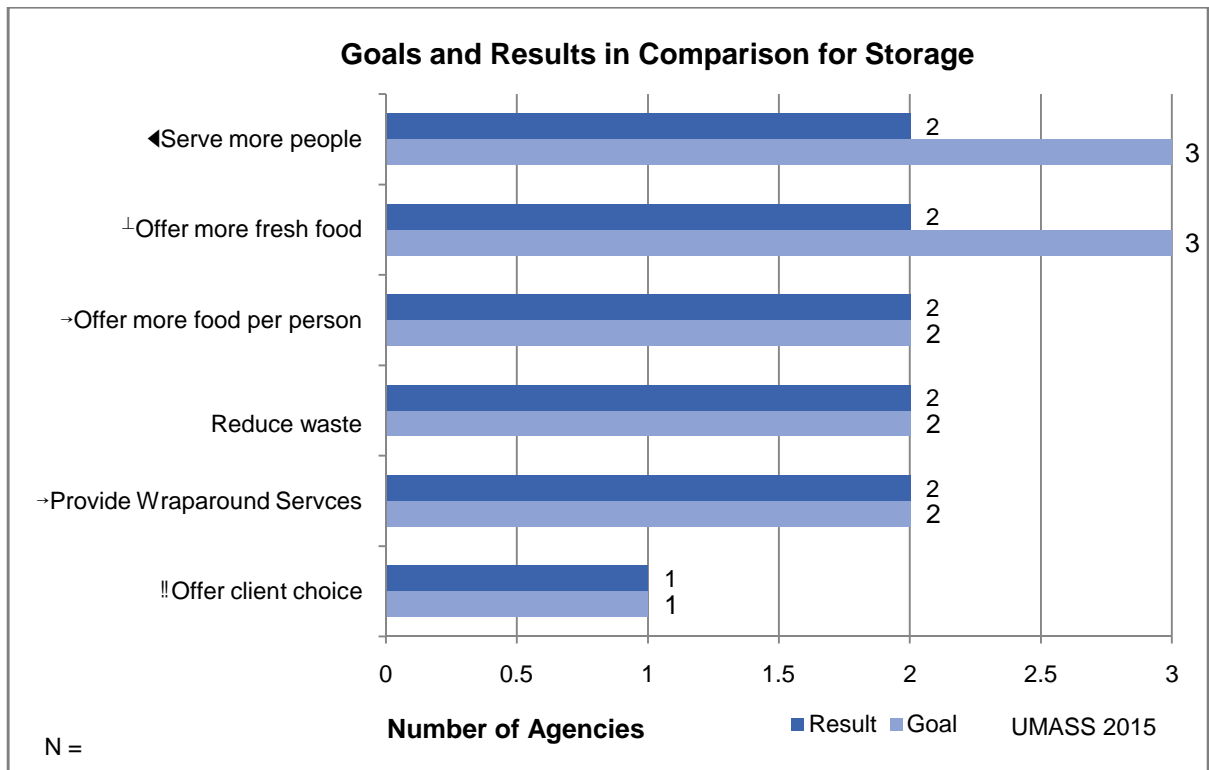


Figure 12: comparative chart showing the original goals and actual results in services achieved by agencies that requested storage facilities through the grant.

In addition to comparing results and goals on the services that agencies are now able to offer, we also wanted to look at the pounds of food that are being distributed now and before. Figure 13 on the following page reveals that in the cases of agencies in which we were able to collect data on how many pounds are currently distributed, there is a large increase in food distribution. As this is one of the main goals that the Food Bank has for the capacity building grant and for member agencies in general, this result is overwhelmingly a success.

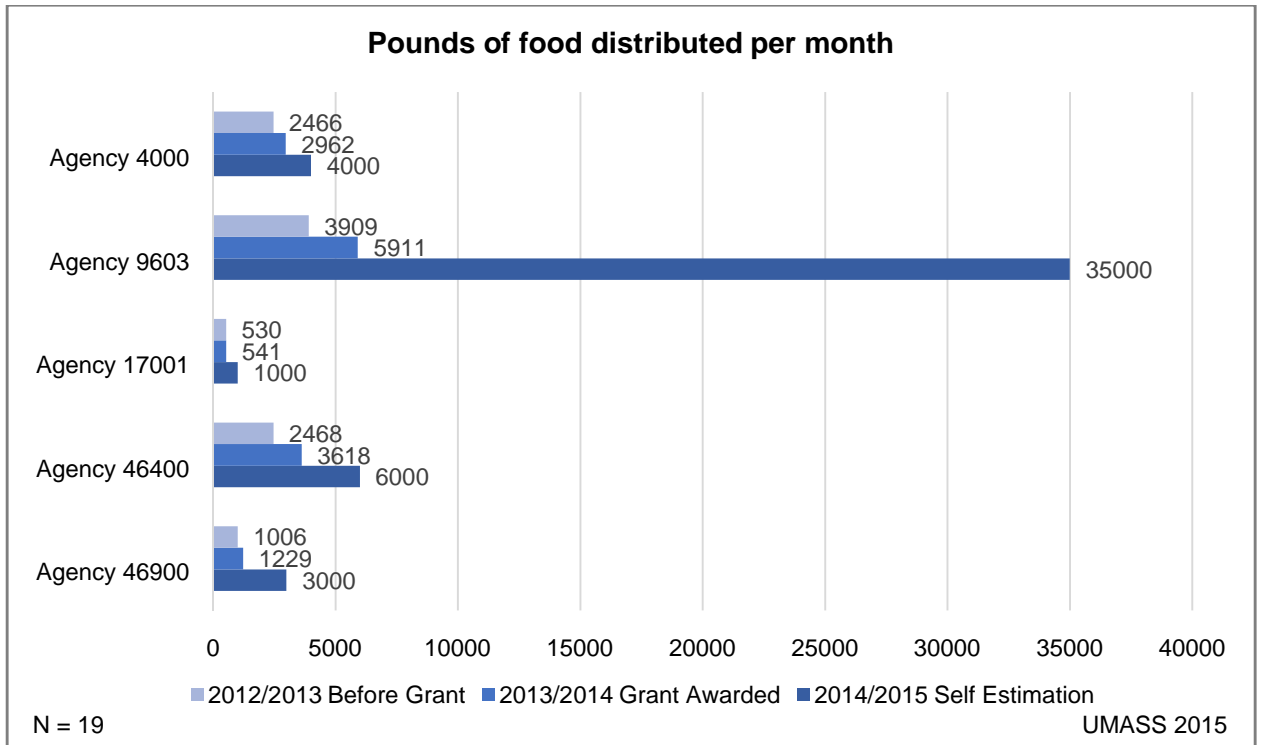


Figure 13: comparative chart showing the pounds of food distributed before and after the grant for the first grant year.

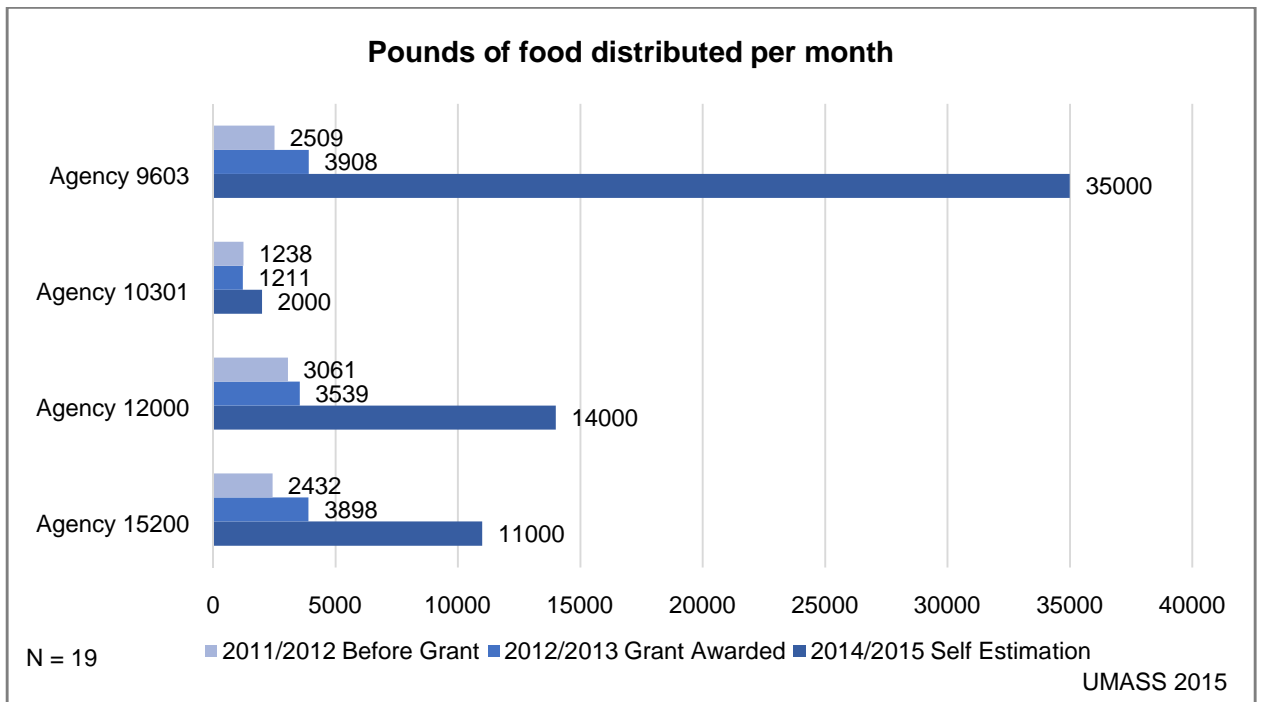


Figure 13 Continued: comparative chart showing the pounds of food distributed before and after the grant for the second grant year

In order to sum up if the grant was successful, we asked the agencies themselves. Figure 14 reveals that out of the 19 agencies that we surveyed, 18 agencies considered the grant successful. This can confirm that agencies were extremely satisfied with the grant that they received and would apply again. This means that there is a great need for funding in order to improve capacity. The one agency was unhappy with the grant was due to the fact that they needed the grant for a different purpose, but did not realize this until after the fact.

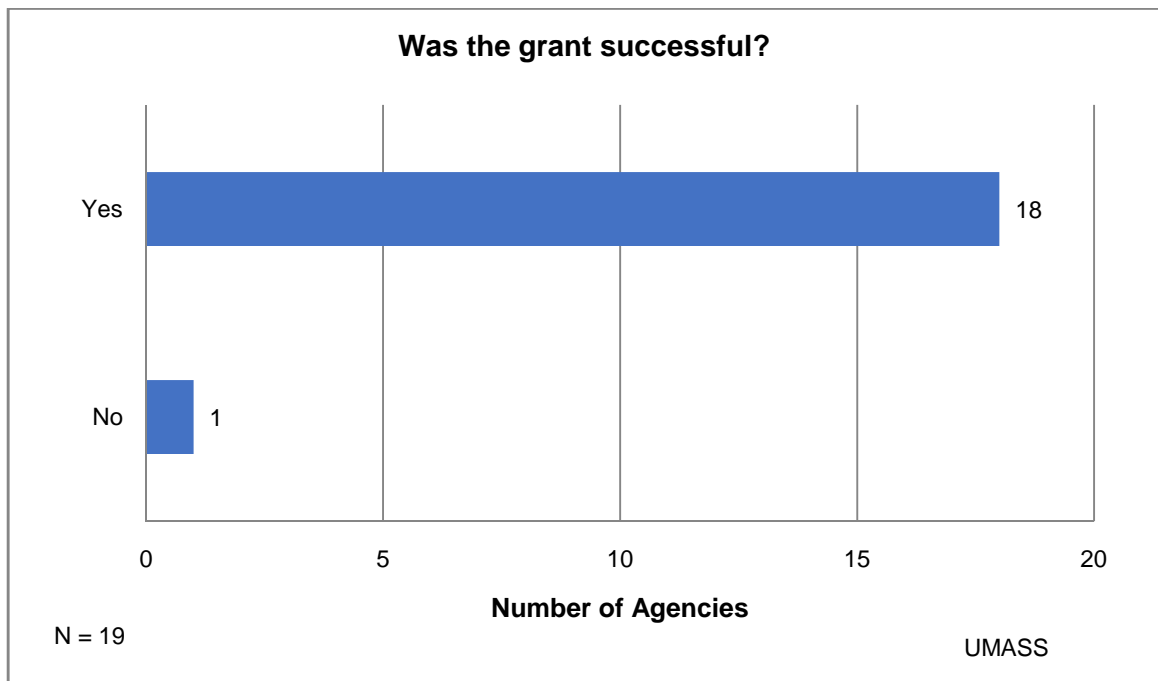


Figure 14: graph showing the self-estimated success rate of the grant as rated by the agencies.

iv. Grant Process

In order to help improve the grant process, the team was also curious in finding out what more can be done to improve directly from the agencies. When asked if agencies wish they had applied for the grant for a different purpose, we received mixed results in which 12 said no and seven actually wish they had applied for a different purpose (Figure 15).

The seven agencies that replied in the affirmative have provided detailed feedback on what they wish they had applied for, which can indicate future financial goals. Their responses are included in the following statements.

1. One agency wishes they asked for an additional fridge, dollies and shelving.
2. Not necessarily for another purpose in terms of this grant, but another agency needs money for staffing and operations and wish this grant could provide for that.
3. Money for operating costs would be more helpful because this is the hardest money to raise.
4. The biggest need for another agency is transporting food from the Food Bank, so they wish they had requested a van. However, the agency also acknowledges that this could also potentially be detrimental due to higher gas prices and lack of staff and/or volunteers.
5. Another agency wishes to refurbish their cabinets.

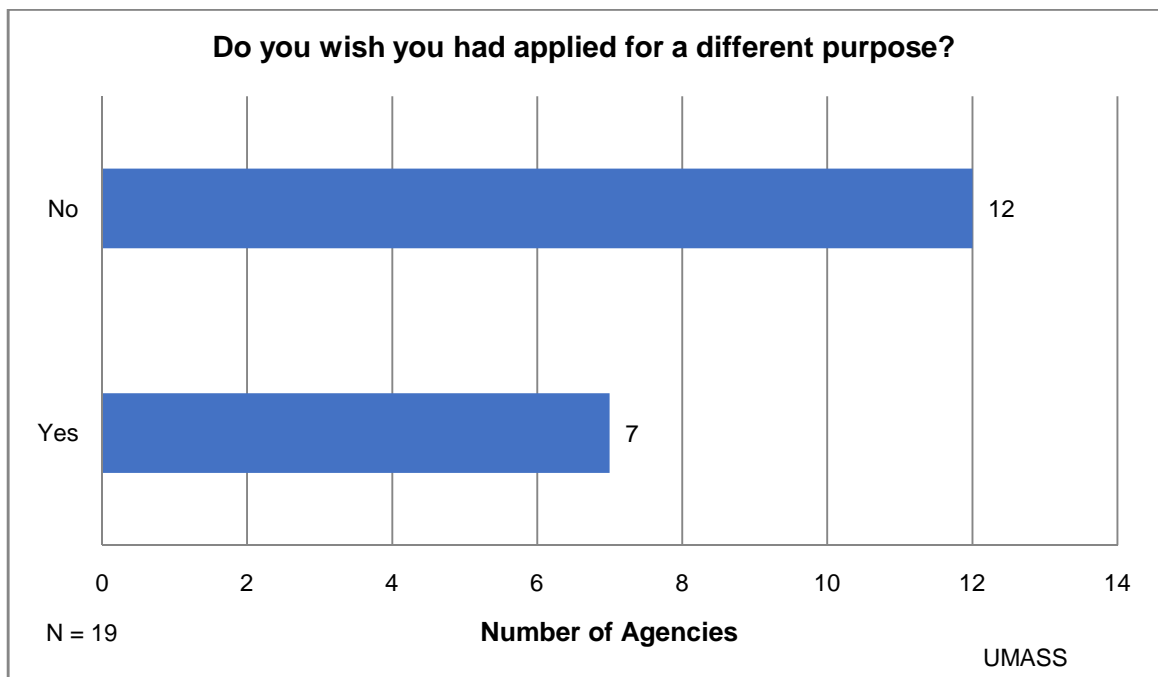


Figure 15: graph showing number of agencies who would have used the grant money for a different purpose.

We were also interested in finding out not only was the grant successful, but whether or not the process was difficult for the agencies. Figure 16 reveals that overwhelmingly agencies did not find the grant process difficult, however the two that replied that it was challenging have provided feedback as well. One of the agencies said that they would not have been able to complete the survey without the help of a grant writer, while another agency said it was difficult to correctly phrase their needs to the Food Bank. These are considerations that may be taken into account in future award periods.

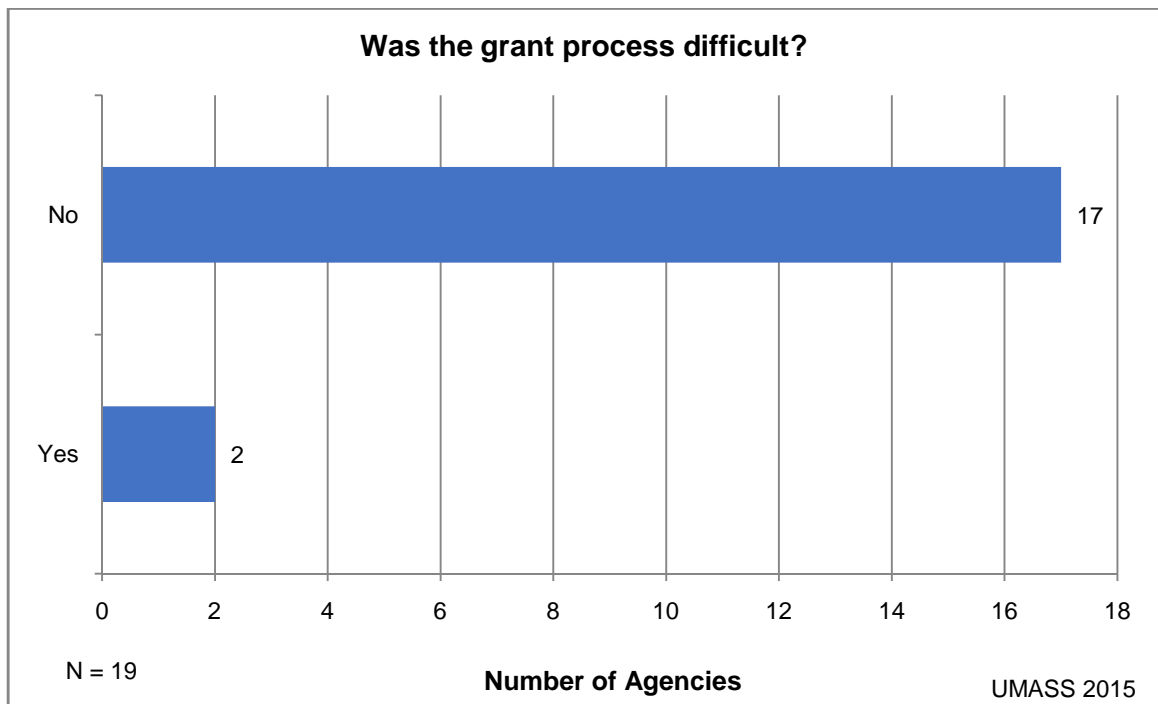


Figure 16: graph showing agencies' response to whether they considered the grant difficult.

We also asked whether or not agencies were satisfied with the grant process and we again saw 17 agencies that were satisfied, with two agencies being unsatisfied as we can see in Figure 17. The feedback can be useful to the Food Bank in determining how to organize the grant process. One agency felt that the selection process produced mixed results. For example, they received one grant, but not another one without any explanation. Ideally they would like larger awards with greater flexibility. Another agency felt that the grant simply did not provide enough money for their needs.

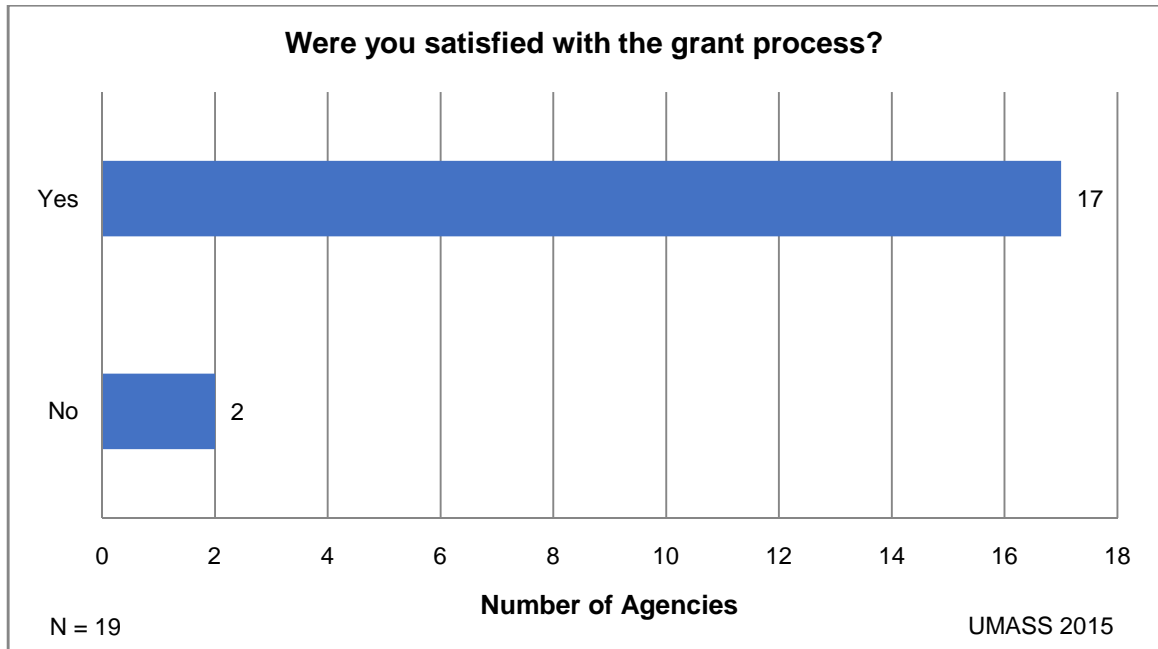


Figure 17: graph showing the agencies response to whether they were satisfied with the grant process.

iv.Future Goals of Agencies

In looking at future goals of agencies, we first had to ask whether the agency is still in need of financial support. Figure 18 shows that 17 agencies still seek financial support, sometimes even to continue existing. However, we as the research team assume that all agencies still need financial support, but that some agencies understood the question to be in regards to the item they had already received. In addition, one of the shelters that we spoke to does not currently distribute food, therefore they understood the following questions to be in regard to food distribution finances which would not apply.

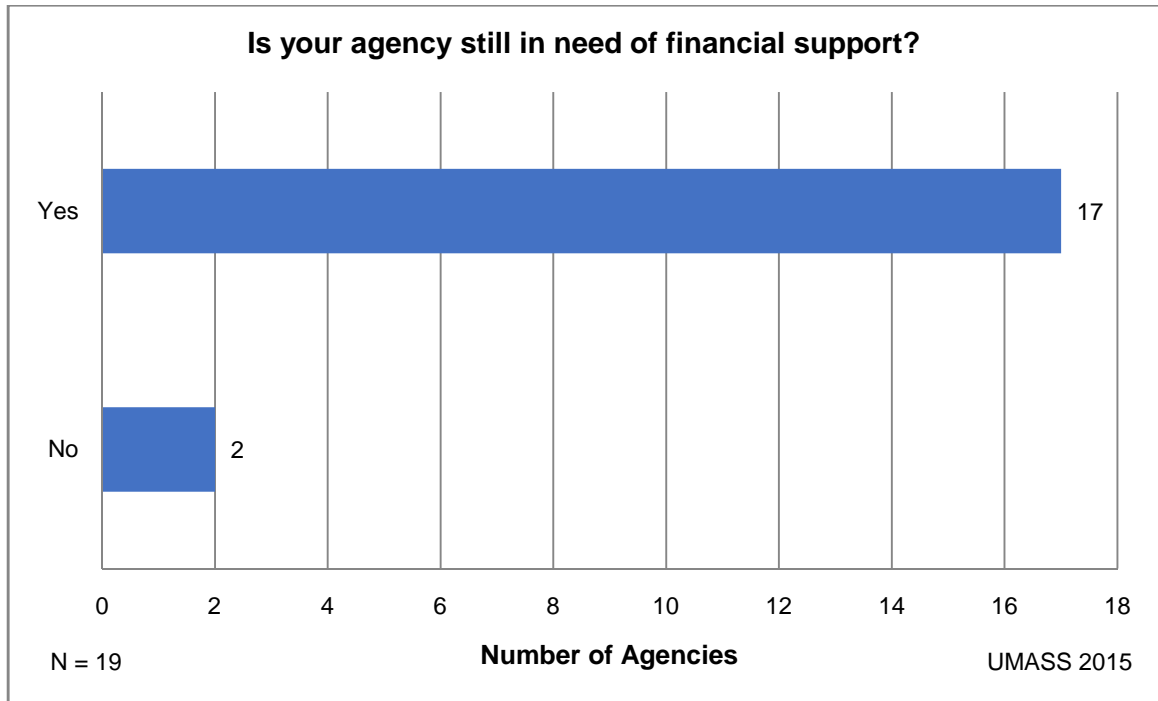


Figure 18: agencies response to whether they are still in need of financial support.

In terms of future goals that have to do with infrastructure and space, the most needed items include storage space, adding another fridge and expanding the space in general. Figure 19 details the specifics of these goals. 12 agencies are looking to increase their storage space and 11 agencies want to add another fridge to their pantry. Seven agencies would like to expand their space for the client choice model and four agencies want to add a kitchen. Two agencies plan to add tables to their soup kitchen and one agency planned to add a ramp to give access to disabled clients. Many of these items are available through the capacity building grant.

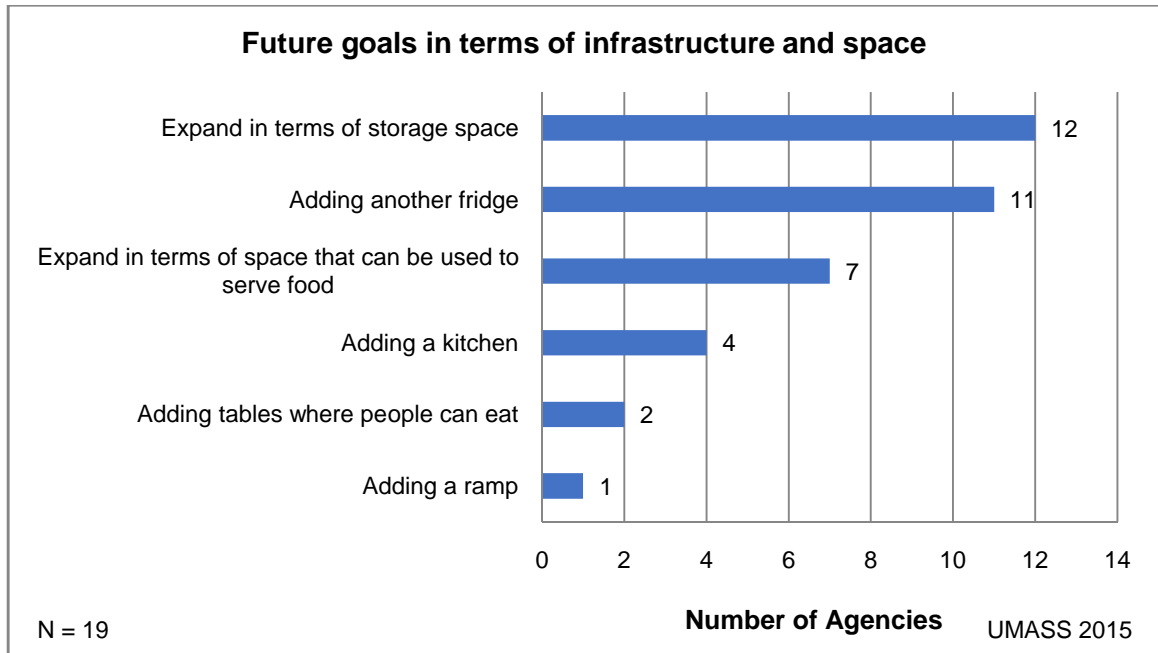


Figure 19: future goals of the agencies in terms of infrastructure and space.

We were also interested in looking at future goals in terms of service. Figure 20 reveals that agencies are extremely interested in increasing the services they offer and the amount of people that they can reach. 14 agencies want to serve more people, while 12 agencies would like to serve more fresh food and offer more food per person. Nine agencies would like to provide longer opening hours during the week and five agencies would like to open on the weekends. Six agencies would like to reduce waste. Four agencies want to provide Wraparound Services to their clients, while three agencies want to give access to disabled people and offer a client choice model. This reveals that while the grant was successful in many of these areas, member agencies are constantly looking to improve their services and there is always a need for greater funding and support.

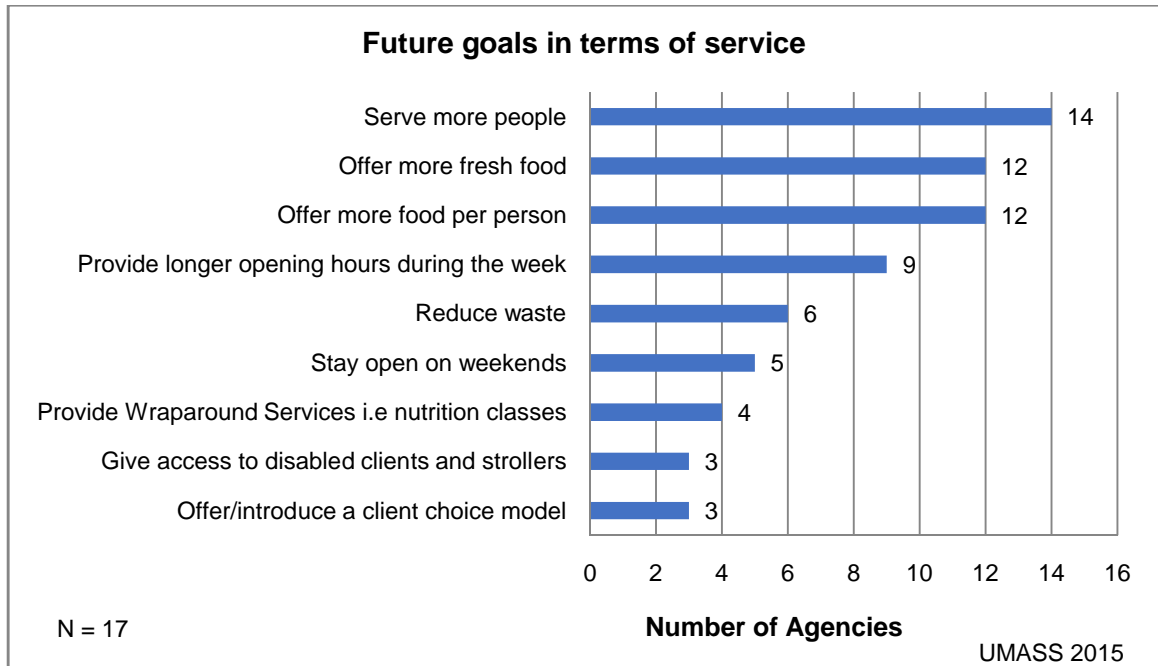


Figure 20: graph showing the future goals of the agencies in terms of service.

v. Correlations

In order to assist the Food Bank in determining where to best move forward from the evaluation, we have provided several figures that inform correlations and can show where money is being spent most effectively. Figure 21 show, the relationship between the number of volunteers and size of the client-base (number of client served), each dot is an agency. The chart includes also information on how much healthy food is being served: symbol size proportional to percentage of healthy food served. What we find is that when agencies are bigger it may be more difficult to distribute healthy food. Agencies with a smaller client-base seem to be more likely to distribute healthy food. This seems to be true even when agencies have a small numbers of volunteers.

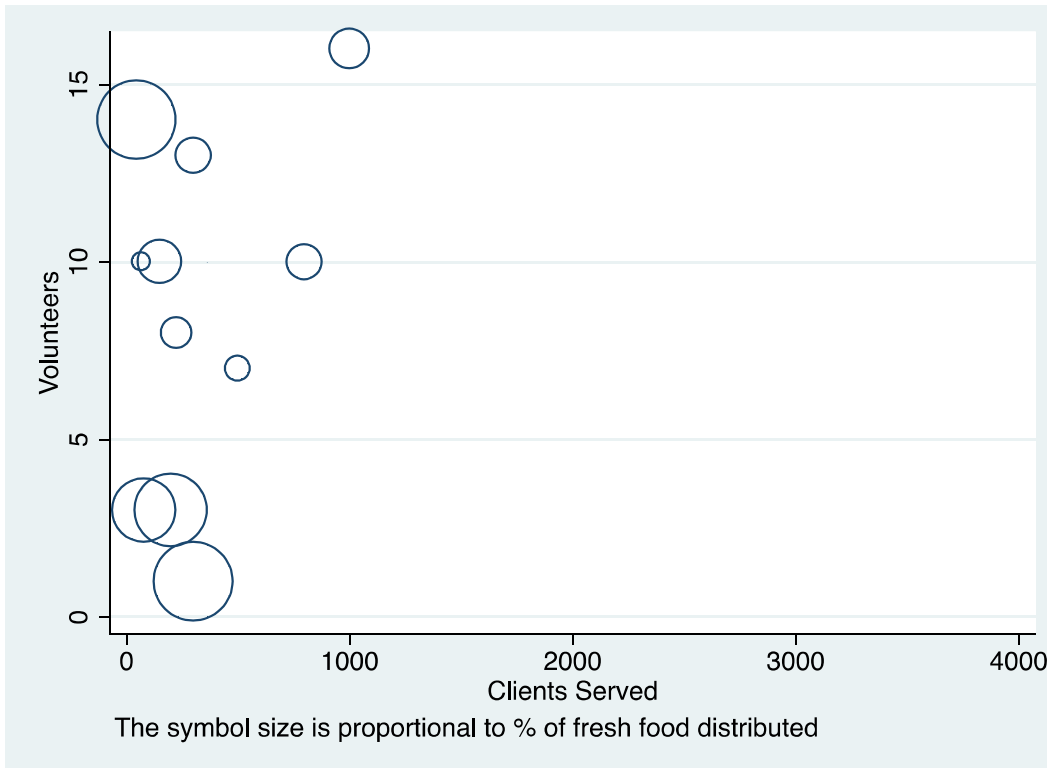


Figure 21: correlation between number of volunteers and number of clients served in each agency. The symbol size is proportional to the percentage of fresh food distributed (N=11).

Figure 22 is a scatter plot similar to Figure 21: it shows the correlation between the number of employees (instead of volunteers) and the number of clients served. It also reports the percentage of healthy food served. This figure confirms the idea that smaller agencies (with less clients) may be more likely to serve healthy food. Figure 22 reveals that agencies that serve fewer than 400 clients have a better chance of providing healthier food. However the number of employees seem to help increase the percentage of healthy food served.

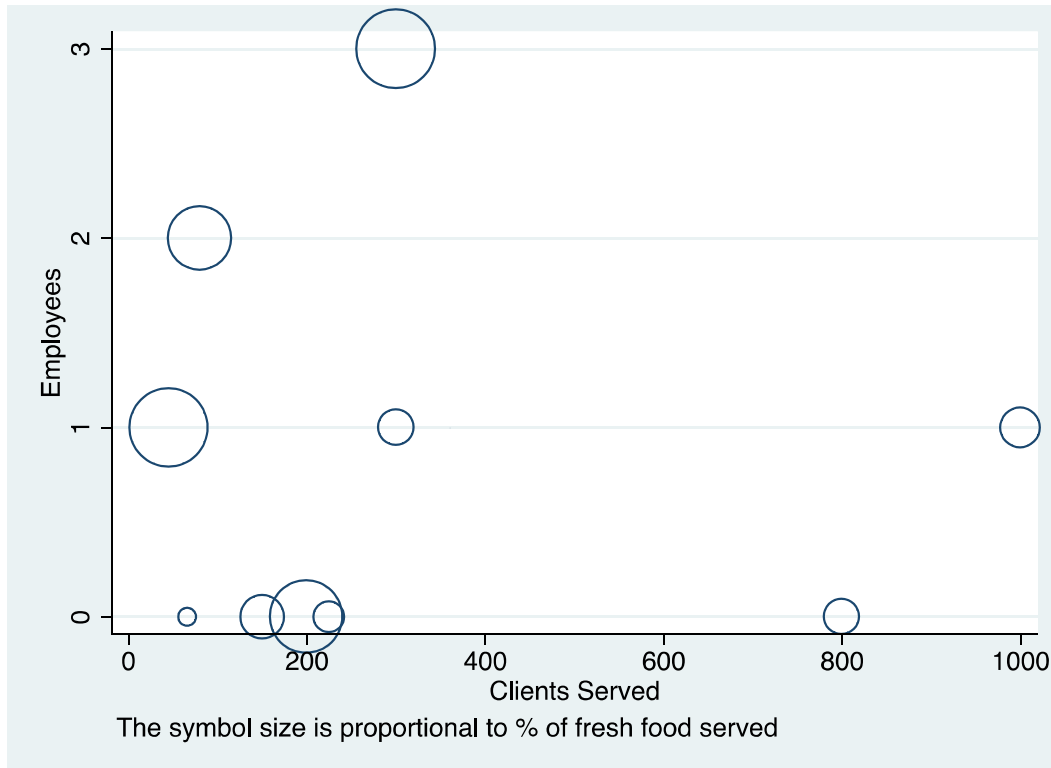


Figure 22: graph showing the correlation of number of employees and clients in each agency. The symbol size is proportional to the percentage of fresh food served (N=10).

We also looked at the distribution of the choice model between agencies of different size. and the relationship adoption of the choice model and between percentage of healthy food served. Figure 23 shows the relationship between number of clients and percentage of healthy food served. The large symbols are agencies that adopted the choice model. The sample is small (N=11) and results should therefore be taken with caution, but it seems that the number of clients (agency size) and not the adoption of the choice model is more positively correlated to the provision of healthy food. Nevertheless among small agencies the choice model seem to have a positive effect on percentage of healthy food. Among agencies with less than 400 clients, 4 out of 2 agencies that distribute more than 20% or healthy food have the choice model.

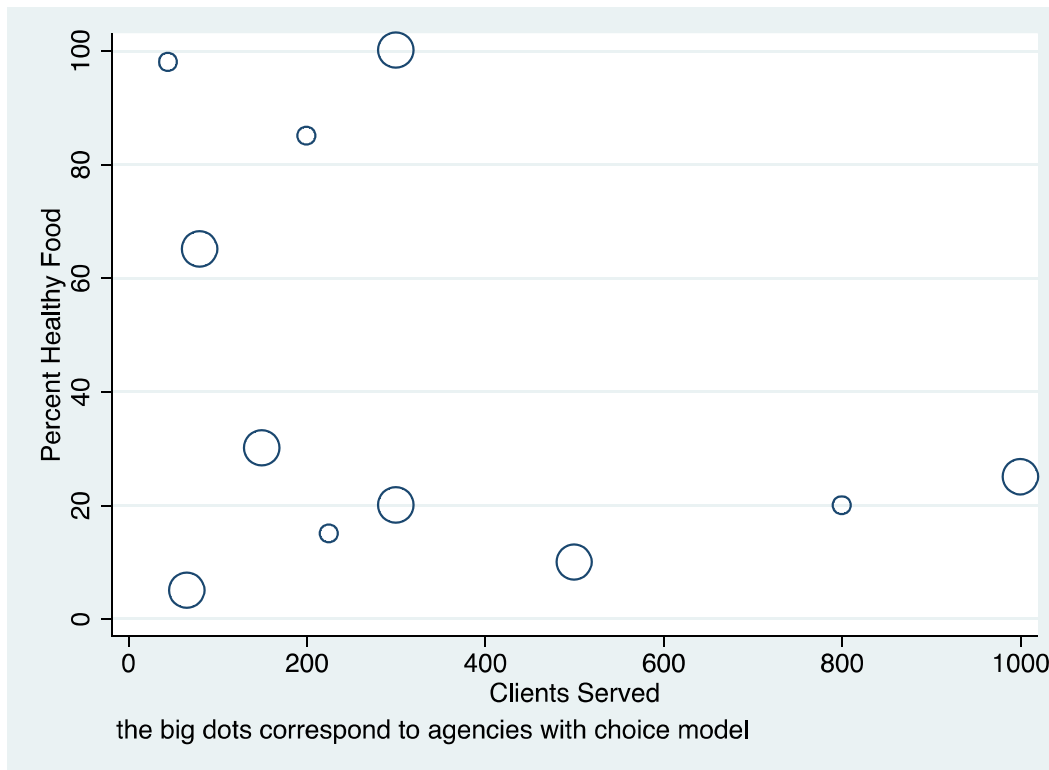


Figure 23: graph showing the correlation of percentage of healthy food and clients served in each agency. The symbol size is proportional to the agencies who offer a client choice model.

In addition to these correlations, the team also found positive correlations (0.49) between Wraparound Services and healthy food being distributed (table in Figure 24). However we cannot say whether or not Wraparound Services leads to healthy food or if healthy food leads to Wraparound Services. There is also a positive correlation between Wraparound Services and a client choice model. This can indicate that if clients are given or choose healthy food (such as a variety of more or less familiar vegetables) then the services might be useful/necessary to show clients how to cook with unfamiliar items. In absence of client choice model, the wraparound services might help clients learn new recipes and make the most of unfamiliar veggies. In addition, Figure 24 reveals that the number of clients served positively correlates to whether or not agencies are open on weekends, indicating that the weekends are a convenient time for many working clients to come in.

```

CORRELOGRAM
healthyfood = % of healthy food
clients      = number of clients
choicemodel = the agency has the choice model
openWE       = the agency is open on weekend
accessD      = the agency has access to disabled
WAservices   = the agency has wraparound services
(obs=11 sample size)

          | health~d  clients choice~l openWE accessDW aserv~s
-----+-----
healthyfood | 1.0000
clients     | -0.3574  1.0000
choicemodel | -0.2492  0.0401  1.0000
openWE      | -0.4622  0.4974  0.0386  1.0000
accessD     | -0.0608 -0.0265  0.1336 -0.2406  1.0000
WAservices  |  0.4867  0.0360  0.3105 -0.1491  0.4303  1.0000

```

Figure 24: correlogram showing the correlation between the following variables: percentage of healthy food served by the agency, adoption of client choice model, agency open on weekend, access to disabled clients, and adoption of wraparound services.

VI. Recommendations

1. Include clearer contact information on the application. Several agencies that we spoke to wished that communication was more clear, and making the agencies aware of who they can reach out to can improve the communication.
2. Create a form that combines returning receipts with required narratives of the experience. From conversations with the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, agencies will return their receipts from the items purchased with the grants, but not qualitative information about their experience with the grant and grant process. By creating a combined form, this can increase the return of information.
3. Construct a memo with best practices for all agencies. While there are several guidelines for receiving the grant such as the ACE points and needs of member agencies, a document that

can be circulated will both inform agencies of best practices and increase their chances of receiving a grant.

4. Provide feedback on applications. In several cases, agencies did not receive a grant based on a poorly filled out application and/or unreasonable expectations. Creating a dialogue between these agencies and the Food Bank can increase the potential of these agencies to receive a grant.

5. Create specific criteria that the grant award is dependent on. Several agencies were confused about why they received money for one item and not another. This will help increase transparency and trust between the Food Bank and member agencies.

6. Maximize reach-out potential with a system in place to coordinate and contact agencies. Currently, member agencies communicate with the Food Bank on a case-by-case basis. From our focus groups, we discovered that some agencies that had not applied for the grant had never heard of it or did not know that they could apply.

7. Create a structure for setting up and running Facebook accounts (workshops, volunteers, etc...).

8. Update all databases of agencies.

9. Consider future grants for operational needs and staffing. Several agencies discussed the severity of needs to deal with bills and coordination. As one agency said, “concrete resources are useful, unless there is no money to pay the electricity bill”. Furthermore, agencies acknowledged that they have need of more volunteers.

10. Refrigerators and computers seem to be highly effective in improving agencies’ performance.

11. Large agencies seem less likely to be able to serve fresh food. Their operation structure could be further analyzed to determine how to help them expand the fresh food offer.

12. Wraparound services seem to be highly correlated with the amount of fresh food served and might be further encouraged.

12. Helping agencies expand their opening time to weekends definitely help increasing the client base.

VII. Conclusion

Our analyses seem to confirm that the capacity building grant is effective and successful. The agencies that received a capacity building grant from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts

considered it successful. Agencies reported that they were able to implement the improvements they had anticipated and were in a better situation than before the grant. Most of the items requested with the grant money were refrigerators and freezers. Agencies reported that they were able to serve more fresh food like vegetables and fruit because they could store in the refrigerators. Storage possibilities like shelves helped agencies apply the client choice model better. Agencies that received the grant, considered the application process for the grant straightforward.

Quite a few received help from professional grant writers who were better able to summarize what the agency needed. The biggest request after having received the capacity building grant was to have more volunteers to help with giving out the food and helping with clients. Volunteers are also needed to offer more opening hours to clients. While some pantries were open twice a week, most were not open on weekends, and some only opened once every three weeks. Other pantries were looking for bigger space to be able to store more food and offer a better client choice model for clients. One of people in charge in one agency suggested that several pantries could pool together their resources and buy a bigger building where the different agencies could operate on different days. This way the clients could always come to the same building and it would make operations run more smoothly.

We are very grateful for this opportunity to help the food bank. The research team is hopeful that this report and our recommendation are useful to the Food Bank in order to further improve its already successful grant program and provide the best experience for member agencies.

VIII. Appendices

i. Appendix A, Problem Definition

PROBLEM DEFINITION WORKSHEET

Strategic focus of the project	
<p>Pertinent background</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deals with member agencies who lack capacity to accept, store, and distribute food . • Developed a network Capacity Building Department which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trains agency staff and volunteers on best practices with storing, accepting, and distributing food. • Assisting with capacity building grants for equipment (fridges, storage units) to operate more efficiently. 	<p>Key Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any limitations on the budget and providing grants? • Is there restrictions monetary resources for future grants? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any particular processes or strategic methods one might have to follow for legal or reporting reasons? • Are the current member agencies permanent? • Are the internal policies of agencies set in stone or can be altered and influenced
<p>Criteria for success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase amount of food used for distributing, as a result from member agency grants. • Improvement of food quality to be distributed by member agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notable growth in number of people reached from the 56 grants awarded to member agencies • Acknowledging the impact and opportunities for improvement • Accepting recommendations from agencies that are thriving. • Identify priorities: serving underserved areas 	<p>Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Capacity Building Department • Christina Maxwell, Director of Programs • Dale West, Agency Relations Manager • Alan Dallmann, Agency Resource Coordinator • Donors • Member agencies
<p>Boundary Definition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project focuses on the increasing distribution capacity of food, not capacity of producing. • Should the project focus on grant recipient's, or focus on the recommendations from all 200 partner agencies? • Is the recommendations and analysis of the project based on the information derived from the food bank and member agencies? • What should or should not be included in the project to assist with the mission? • Can Food Bank expand into other geographies and gaining more partners? 	<p>Key resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Bank employees (Network Capacity Building Department) • Member agencies (Grant and non-grant recipient's) • Quantitative Data from Food Bank and member agencies(pre/post-grant activities) • Relevant reports? Other resources?

ii. Appendix B, Focus Group Questions

CPPA team

Focus Group Survey Questions for Agencies affiliated to Food Bank of Western MA

“Group 1: Agencies that applied for grants and were successful”

Introduction

Hello my name is I am a graduate student from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and I am calling on behalf of the Food Bank.

The Food Bank has partnered with a research team from the University of Massachusetts Amherst to assess the Food Bank Grant Program. Our research team is analyzing the grant process through interviews and focus groups. Our objective is to determine whether the Food Bank capacity building grants are successful in helping agencies improve their services. We would like to ask you a few questions as part of this assessment.

Who would be the best person for me to talk to in your agency? I would like to set up an appointment to speak to you for 30 minutes when would that work for you?

If you prefer to check the information I provided with the Food Bank before answering my questions, you can contact Alan Dallmann at 413 247 9738.

BACKGROUND

1. Background information
 - a. Is this a
 - i. Pantry?
 - ii. Soup kitchen?
 - iii. Shelter?
 - b. How many people work here?
 - c. How many are volunteers?
 - d. How many pounds of food do you distribute per month? (How many units of certain fresh food, etc.)
 - e. What constitutes healthy/fresh food in your program?
 - f. What percentage of healthy food do you think you serve?
 - g. How many people do you serve on average per month?
 - h. Is there a limitation on the number times clients can be served in a month?
 - i. Can clients choose their food? Do you have a choice model?
 - j. What are your opening hours? (Day - from ... to ...)
 - k. Are you open on weekends?

1

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- l. Is your agency accessible to disabled clients and/or strollers?
- m. Do you provide Wraparound Services, i.e. Nutrition Classes?
- n. Do you know how much money is spent each month to run the agency?
- o. What are the main sources of funding for your agency?

GRANT APPLICATION(S)

- 2. When did you apply for the grant?
 - a. Year:
 - b. Year:
 - c. Year:

- 3. Was the grant process difficult?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

- 4. What was (were) the main challenge(s) in applying for the grant? (check all the apply)
 - a. Staff members have very little time
 - b. The application was too long to complete
 - c. The text of the application was too difficult/complex
 - d. English is the 2nd language of the staff working in this agency
 - e. You had difficulties in explaining how you were going to use the grant
 - f. You were not sure about what type of expenses the grant could cover
 - g. Other.....

- 5. Did you receive any help in filling the application(s) from the Food Bank?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

- 6. Who helped you?
 - a. Name
 - b. Position and organization
 - c. Is the person associated to Food Bank?

- 7. If you received help from Food Bank, how did you receive help? (check all the apply)
 - a. Phone
 - b. In person
 - c. Email

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- d. Other...
8. What was (were) the main challenge(s) in applying for the grant? (check all the apply)
- a. Staff members have very little time
 - b. The application was too long to complete
 - c. The text of the application was too difficult/complex
 - d. English is the 2nd language of the staff working in this agency
 - e. You had difficulties in explaining how you were going to use the grant
 - f. You were not sure about what type of expenses the grant could cover
 - g. Other.....
 - h.
9. Did you attend the workshop for the application process that the Food Bank offered?
- a. Yes
 - i. Was the assistance helpful?
 - b. No, but I would have attended if I knew about it
 - c. No, we did not need it
10. Would you apply again?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
11. Would you need/seek assistance again to submit another application?
- a. Yes, explain:
 - b. No, explain:

For agencies that have applied more than once and failed a first time

12. What did you do differently in the successful application?
- a. We gave more detailed information on what item(s) we were going to purchase.
 - b. We clarified what we needed the grant for.
 - c. We chose a different use for the grant.
 - d. We received help in completing the application

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- a. Serve more people
 - b. Offer more food per person
 - c. Offer more fresh food
 - d. Reduce Waste
 - e. Offer Client Choice
 - f. Provide longer opening hours
 - g. Stay open on weekend
 - h. Give access to disabled clients and/or strollers
 - i. Provide Wraparound Services, i.e. Nutrition Classes?
18. Were you overall satisfied with the grant process?
- a. Yes
 - b. No ... why not
19. Do you have any recommendations for the Food Bank to improve their grant process?
20. Let's suppose your agency wishes to improve the services offered, you think your agency has the know-how to improve/expand? Do you know what strategy to follow and what equipment you need?
- a. Yes, you have a plan
 - b. Yes, you have a plan but you wish you could consult with the Food bank
 - c. No, you wish you could ask for advice to the Food Bank
21. What is the biggest challenge of your agency in its operations?
- a. Finances
 - b. We do not have enough volunteers
 - c. We do not receive enough food donations
 - d. More people come to our agency than we can serve
 - e. Other...
22. Where do you see your organization in 1 year from now?

iii. Appendix C, Final Survey

CPPA Team

**Focus Group Survey Questions for
Agencies affiliated to Food Bank of Western MA
“Group 1: Agencies that applied for grants and were successful”**

Introduction

Hello my name is ... and I am part of a graduate student research team from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and we are conducting a research on behalf of the Food Bank.

The Food Bank wants to determine whether the Food Bank Capacity Building Grant Program is useful to agencies like yours. Your agency participated in this grant program and received a grant.

Our research team is analyzing the grant process through interviews with agencies. Our objective is to determine whether the Food Bank Capacity Building Grant Program is successful in helping agencies improve their services.

We want to learn from you in order to improve the grant process in the future. Your answers will also help us improve our services to you and be more helpful to your agency.

We would like to ask you a few questions as part of this assessment. Your answers will be very helpful. Would you have a few minutes to answer our questions?

Part I: AGENCY BACKGROUND

NOTE: QUESTION 1 WILL REQUIRE SEARCHING INFORMATION IN THE APPLICATIONS; WE DID THIS FOR YOU. THE X MEANS THAT WE FOUND THIS INFORMATION IN THE APPLICATION. PLEASE ASK ALL QUESTIONS WHERE YOU DO NOT SEE AN X:

1. Background Information

1.	Is this a	
a	Pantry?	
b	Soup kitchen?	
c	Shelter?	
2.	How many people work here?	
3.	How many are volunteers?	
4.	How many pounds of food do you distribute per month? (How many units of certain fresh food, etc.)	
5.	What constitutes healthy/fresh food in your program?	
6.	What percentage of healthy food do you think you serve?	
7.	How many people do you serve on average per month?	
8.	Is there a limitation on the number times clients can be served in a month?	
9.	Do you have a choice model?	
10.	What are your opening hours? (Day - from ... to ...)	
11.	Are you open on weekends?	
12.	Is your agency accessible to disabled clients and/or strollers?	
13.	Do you provide Wraparound Services, i.e. Nutrition Classes?	
14.	Do you know how much money is spent each month to run the agency?	
15.	What are the main sources of funding for your agency?	

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Part II: GRANT APPLICATION(S)

NOTE TO SURVEYOR: WE CHECKED THE APPLICATION YEAR WITH A RED X.
REMIND THE AGENCY YOU ARE INTERVIEWING WHICH APPLICATION YEAR YOU
ARE REFERRING TO.

2. When did your agency apply for the grant?

1.	Year 2012	
2.	Year 2013	
3.	Year 2014	

3. Was the grant process difficult?

Yes	
No	

4. Would you apply again?

Yes	
No	

CPPA Team

5. If the respondent answered “No” to question 4: (Please check all the apply)
Why would you not apply again?

1.	You are no longer in need of the grant	
2.	The grant is too small for the effort	
3.	You need the grant but your staff has too much work and not enough time to fill the application	
4.	Nobody in your agency is able to fill out the application	
5.	Even if you get the grant, it is difficult to actually receive and use the money, it is too much paperwork	
6.	You wish you could receive a grant but you think your agency will never receive a grant because there are other agencies with more needs	
7.	You feel as if the process might be biased toward certain agencies	
8.	Other [SURVEYOR NEEDS TO TAKE NOTES BELOW]	

Part III: GRANT AWARDED

NOTE: QUESTION 6 WILL REQUIRE SEARCHING INFORMATION IN THE APPLICATIONS, WE DID THIS FOR YOU: THE X MEANS THAT WE FOUND THIS INFORMATION IN THE APPLICATION; HOWEVER WE STILL WANT TO KNOW IF THEY REQUESTED ANY OTHER ITEMS WE WERE NOT AWARE OF.

6. For what item(s) did you request the grant? Specify

	item	Year 2012 (1)	Year 2013 (2)	Year 2014 (3)
1.	Fridge			
2.	Freezer			
3.	Storage (Shelving, Racks)			
4.	Displays			
5.	Ramps			
6.	Utensils			
7.	Curtains			
8.	Table			
9.	Kitchen Infrastructure Appliances			
10.	Computer			
11.	Car			
12.	Funds for wraparound services, (for example: culinary classes, nutritionist etc)			

7. After you received the grant, were you able to buy the item(s) you wanted to buy?

Yes	
No, Why not SURVEYOR NEEDS TO TAKE NOTES BELOW	

CPPA Team

8. For what purpose did you request these items? What was the original motivation in your application? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]:

		Information we have	Confirmation
1.	Serve more people		
2.	Offer more food per person		
3.	Offer more fresh food		
4.	Reduce waste		
5.	Offer/introduce a Client Choice system		
6.	Provide longer opening hours during the week		
7.	Stay open on weekends		
8.	Give access to disabled clients and strollers		
9.	Provide Wraparound Services, i.e. Nutrition Classes		

9. Was the grant successful in helping your agency reach its goals expressed in question 8? [READ answer in 8]

		Yes, the grant fulfilled its purpose	No, the grant did not fulfill its purpose
1.	Serve more people		
2.	Offer more food per person		
3.	Offer more fresh food		
4.	Reduce waste		
5.	Offer/introduce a Client Choice system		
6.	Provide longer opening hours during the week		
7.	Stay open on weekends		
8.	Give access to disabled clients and strollers		
9.	Provide Wraparound Services, i.e. Nutrition Classes		

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10. Were your expectations exceeded? In other words, you found that besides your original motivation for the grant, you experienced additional unexpected benefits. For instance you were able to:

1.	Serve more people	
2.	Offer more food per person	
3.	Offer more fresh food	
4.	Reduce waste	
5.	Offer Client Choice	
6.	Provide longer opening hours	
7.	Stay open on weekends	
8.	Give access for wheelchairs or strollers	
9.	Provide Wraparound Services, i.e. Nutrition Classes	

11. Was the grant successful? Were you able to improve your agency by using the grant?

Yes	
No	

12. Do you wish you had asked for money for a different purpose?

Yes, please clarify below SURVEYOR NEEDS TO TAKE NOTES BELOW	
No	

Part IV: PERSPECTIVES AND FUTURE GOALS

13. Is your agency in search of financial support to further improve?

Yes we have new goals	
No, we are fine, we do not plan any improvements at the moment	

14. If you answered yes to question 13: What are your goals in terms of **space and infrastructure**? You want to

1.	Expand in terms of storage space	
2.	Add another fridge	
3.	Expand in terms of space that can be used to serve food	
4.	Add a kitchen	
5.	Add tables where people can eat indoors	
6.	Add a ramp	
7.	Other [SURVEYOR TAKE NOTES BELOW]	

15. If you answered yes to question 13: What is your next goal/ purpose in terms of **service**? You want to:

1.	Serve more people	
2.	Offer more food per person	
3.	Offer more fresh food	
4.	Reduce Waste	
5.	Offer Client Choice	
6.	Provide longer opening hours	
7.	Stay open on weekend	
8.	Give access to disabled clients and/or strollers	
9.	Provide Wraparound Services, i.e. Nutrition Classes	

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16. Were you overall satisfied with the grant process?

Yes	
No, Why not SURVEYOR NEEDS TO TAKE NOTES BELOW	

17. Do you have any recommendations for the Food Bank to improve their grant process?

[SURVEYOR TAKE NOTES BELOW]

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