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Looking To Do More. Evaluating the Process of Researching and Proposing a Location Change to a Local Food Pantry

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LOOKING TO DO MORE. EVALUATING THE PROCESS OF
RESEARCHING AND PROPOSING A LOCATION CHANGE TO LOCAL
FOOD PANTRY

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PIM 69

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Sustainable Development at the SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

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Dedication and Acknowledgement

Many thanks go out to the ladies of the Constant Seekers bible study group. Without them, there would be no project. Thanks for taking a risk and sticking your neck out with me. A special thanks to Kathy Wilkins, Cindy Liben and Robin Bleile who spent numerous hours with food bank on the brain with me. I'd also like to thank the members of the Bleile family. Your passion, inquiry and commitment was instrumental to the success of the project. Your generosity is overwhelming. To Pat Krause, my supervisor, for all your direction and support. An extra special thanks to my family. You are both a motivation and distraction. I love you all! Thank you for all your support!

This is dedicated to Jeff Bleile. You were instrumental in the research of this project. Questioning the whole way. I believe it is due to your organizational skills and perseverance that we were to able to make such an amazing offer to the Norwalk Area Food Bank. You are greatly missed!

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ABSTRACT

As development workers, we often are on the outside looking in. We may have counterparts that are open to the work that we are doing, the suggestions that we may have, but often they are resistant to change. This can be a result of many things including a fear of losing power or a threat to their role as an expert in their area of expertise. I believe both of these played a role in my RPP project. I worked with a group of people who were interested in improving services available at our local food pantry, Norwalk Area Food Bank (NAFB).

This Development Management I CLC evaluates the process that a small group went through to research possible opportunities for implementation at NAFB. When a proposal to relocate the food pantry was presented for the Board, it was met with significant resistance. This capstone seeks to determine whether using the more formal, structured process presented in Development Management I would have led to more thorough research and a more positive response from the Board. Hindsight provides us an interesting prospective in this case, as a few in the organization were not very forthcoming with information. Through interviews with four group participants, opportunities for improvement were evaluated by those who were closest to the project. The consensus was that a more organic process was preferred by the members. They could see the benefits of the Development Management I process, but felt that it would not have led to a different result.

I. Introduction

As development workers, we often are on the outside looking in. We may have counterparts that are open to the work that we are doing, the suggestions that we may have, but often they are resistant to change. This can be a result of many things including a fear of losing power or a threat to their role as an expert in their area of expertise. I believe both of these played a role in my RPP project. I worked with a group of people who were interested in improving services available at our local food pantry, Norwalk Area Food Bank (NAFB). One of the group members was on the Board, but all the other participants including myself, were just volunteers and that further complicated the situation. After completing our research, we presented some ideas to the Board of NAFB, including a proposal to fund a relocation. Many instantly rejected our ideas. This CLC will focus on an evaluation of the process that we went through, and if following the process introduced in Development Management I would have better prepared us to deal with the resistance that we encountered and a better end result.

For my RPP experience, I worked with the local Catholic Charities Diocese of Toledo office. I am a member of the Constant Seekers bible study group. As a group, we have read many books about our call as Christians to love and serve one another, in particular, Making Poverty Personal by Ash Barker. The idea of selling all that you have and following Christ was very difficult for many of the members, but they felt called to do something to help those in need in our community. It had come to our attention that there was a growing number of people in need of the services of a homeless shelter, but the shelters in the surrounding area were almost always full. Catholic Charities runs a transitional home for women and children in town, so we began talking with them about how we might do something similar for men. I wanted my RPP to

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improve the plight of those in need in my hometown, so I volunteered to work as the project coordinator to fulfill my RPP experience.

Catholic Charities is a social service organization affiliated with the Catholic Church. My practicum is with the Diocese of Toledo office located in Norwalk, OH. The mission of the organization is to make real the love that God has for each individual person regardless of their faith or background by serving the poor, speaking for and assisting the neglected and forgotten, respecting and promoting life from beginning to end and nurturing and supporting individuals and families.

The Norwalk office runs Miriam House which provides transitional housing for women and children, a financial education program, and an adult guardianship program. They also administer the federal Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) and the National Point-in-Time Survey for Huron County. The staff at Catholic Charities is well integrated into the assistance community which makes them a great asset to their clients as they can help them maneuver through the maze of services.

While working on the intended project, it became clear that a homeless shelter was a large undertaking that the Constant Seekers were not prepared to take on. During the research phase of that project, we came across a variety of other needs in the community. There was one need in particular that a couple members of the group had a vested interest in. In addition to homelessness, hunger was another issue that was important to the members.

In Huron County, of which Norwalk is the county seat, unemployment and food insecurity have been increasing as a result of the 2008 recession. Food insecurity as defined by the USDA

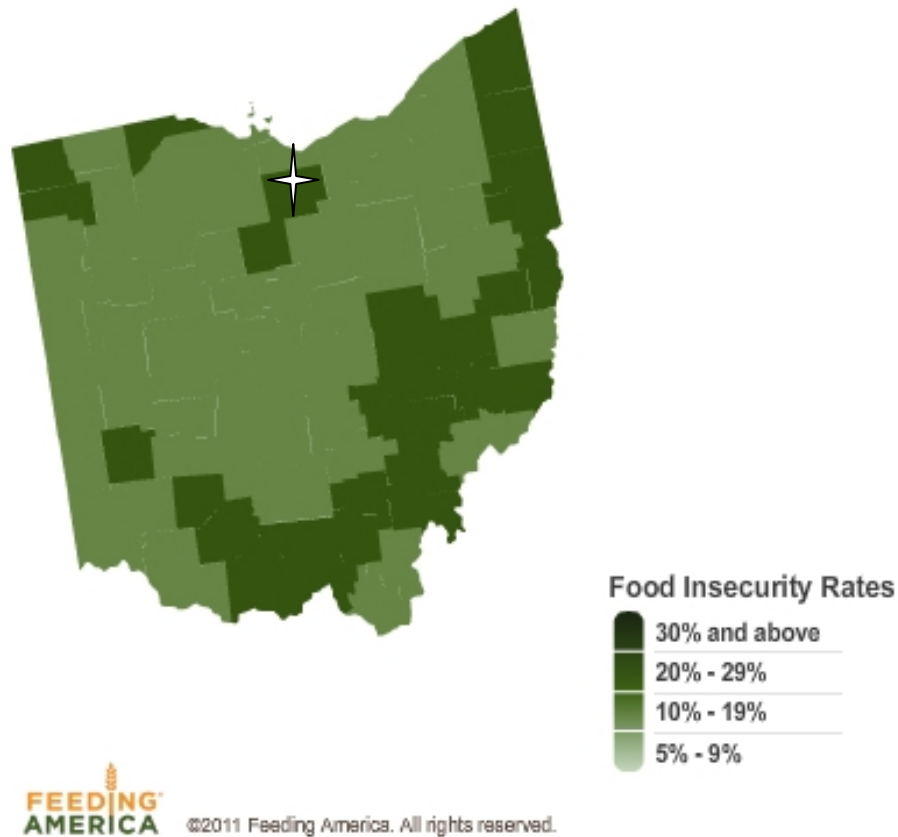
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(2011) in *Food security in the United States in 2010* is broken into low food security and very low food security. Low food security indicates food access problems, but not necessarily a reduction in food intake. Very low food security means that the food intake of one or more household members was reduced and their eating patterns were disrupted at times during the year because the household lacked money and other resources for food (p. 4).

One correlation that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) study did indicate to be very strong was income and food insecurity. In particular, they looked at households with an income of 185% of the poverty guideline. Those households level of food insecurity of 33.8% was much higher than the reported national average of 14.5% (USDA, 2011, p. 10).

According to Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap (2011), Huron County's overall food insecurity rate is 20.5%. Looking at children specifically, that number jumps up to 35.2%. When comparing this number to the average for Ohio of 26.5% or the national average of 23.2%, one notices the severity of the situation locally.

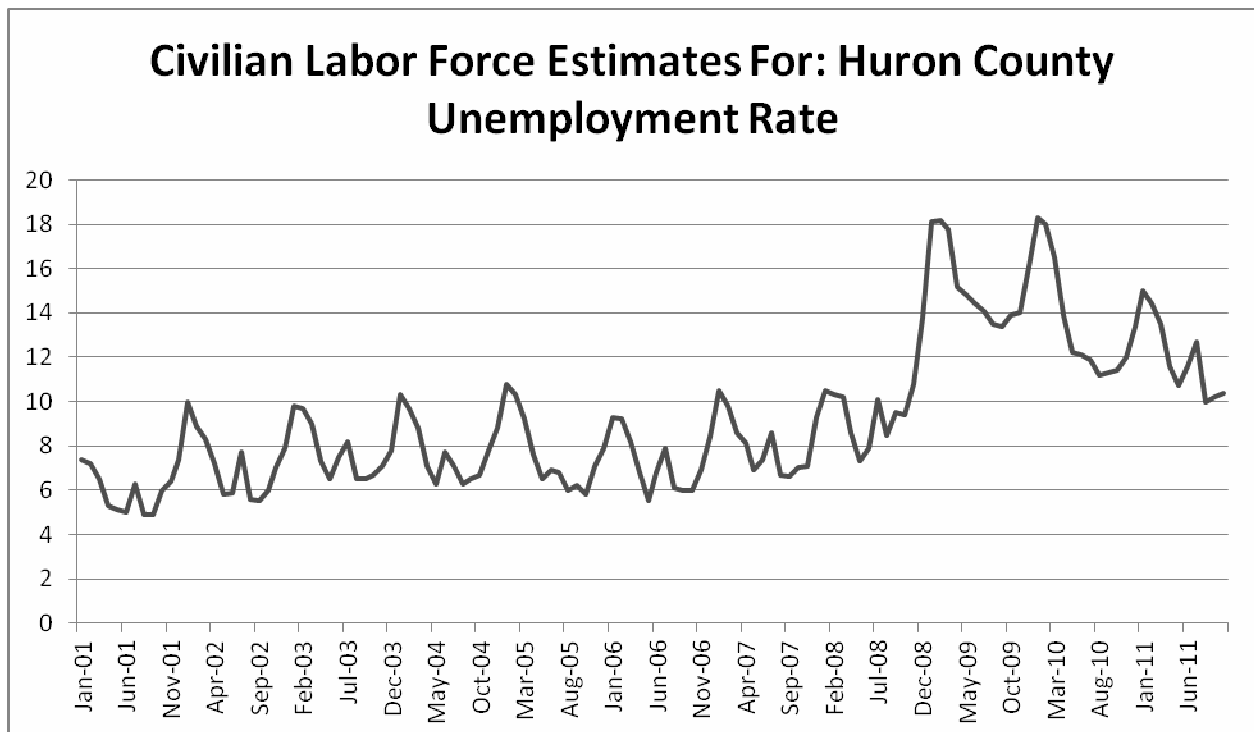
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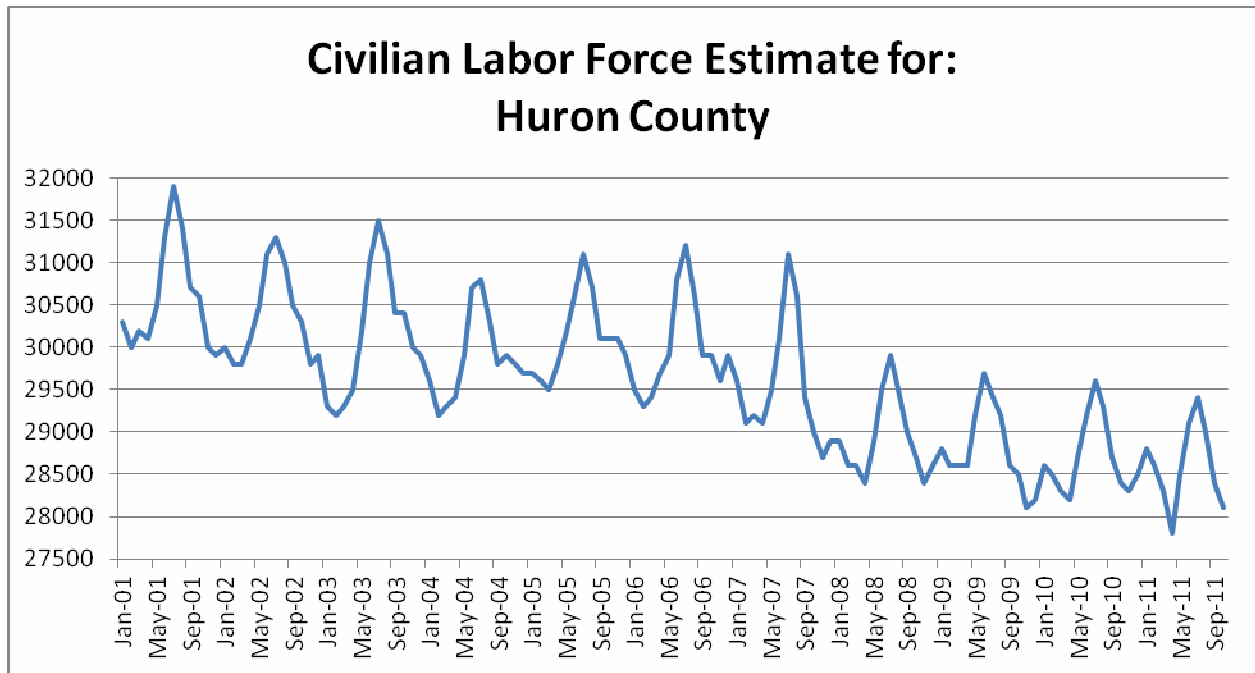
As a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), average Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly known as food stamps) were increased by more than fifteen percent (Richardson, Monke, Falk, 2010) . This increase in benefits was expected to terminate in fiscal year 2018. Since that time, due to the “pay as you go” requirement with the current Congress, future SNAP increases are being taken away to fund other programs. For example, a 2010 bill to increase funds for education and Medicaid included a significant cut to AARA-related increases to SNAP starting in 2014 to offset the costs. Similar steps were taken to fund the Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act of 2010, which included funding for child nutrition programs and WIC, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. This bill moved up the decline in the ARRA increase to September 2013.

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Unemployment is also an ongoing, while improving, issue. Graph 1 shows the unemployment rate of Huron County from 2001 to October 2011, the most current reported number. These numbers are not seasonally-adjusted, so they do include spikes for cyclical employment such as construction and retail labor. When focusing on the issue of hunger, this may be a more accurate interpretation of the reality they and their clients are facing. One component of this unemployment number is the civilian labor force number that is essential to its calculation. Graph 2 shows a decline in the labor force since 2008. Due to how the U.S. calculates the unemployment rate, frustrated workers that leave the labor force after not finding work are not considered unemployed. It appears that it may be underestimated the true unemployment in this case.



Graph 1: Unemployment rate for Huron county



Graph 2: Labor force estimate for Huron county

Description of the organization

The Norwalk Area Food Bank (NAFB) is a community food pantry that was started in 1985 by a group of local churches. Its mission is:

1. To provide in the most effective and sustained way an avenue of assistance for the poor who are in need, in the Norwalk Area.
2. To facilitate the outreach of the churches in Norwalk through the ecumenical and predominately lay person effort.
3. To raise awareness in the Norwalk area of the plight of the hungry.
4. To collect and maintain storage of food stuffs and other support items for the hungry.

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5. To provide short term emergency Hunger Relief through the orderly distribution of food stuffs.
6. To provide a "Clearing House" for local churches so that real needs are being met.

NAFB is located on the main floor of an old church building and is run by the county Community Action Commission (CAC) though it is a separate entity. They provide emergency food for those that meet the income requirements set forth by Second Harvest, the regional food bank. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services(ODJFS) sets the Household income eligibility for all emergency food assistance programs. The guideline is 2 times the federal income poverty guideline minus \$1 (ODJFS, 2011). Clients can receive each month approximately three days' worth of food.

When this project started, the Board of NAFB was composed of members from local churches, but membership numbers and responsibilities were not well-defined. Many of the board members had been involved for some time and age had restricted their participation. The presiding officer, while attending meetings, could not assist with food deliveries at the age of 92. It appeared that they had taken a hands off approach to the operations allowing the CAC to determine much of what happened with the NAFB.

The CAC which runs the NAFB also runs a two-family shelter, houses the Head Start program, administers the utility assistance programs, Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) and Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) Plus programs, and is a sign up point for the Ohio Benefit Bank, which allows people to begin their applications for various government

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assistance programs. The director of the CAC has been the director of the NAFB as well, though at times, the NAFB activities get pushed aside as other priorities surfaced, such as HEAP season. The other staff in the office will help with the tasks of the food pantry when they are able. There are two older women, who are employed through the Ohio Works program, that handle food distribution. CAC is not viewed as an innovative organization in the assistance community as they continue to run their programs the same way as they always have.

The Constant Seekers got involved with the NAFB through the involvement of one of their members who sits on the Board. Volunteers were needed to help haul in the food deliveries received from Second Harvest, as well as supplemental deliveries from local grocery stores. Those experiences got the ladies talking and asking questions. In the light of how best to serve the clients, we noticed some opportunities for improvement. Below are listed the areas that were highlighted as opportunities for improvement:

- The selection of food available to clients did not include many nutritious items. They do not participate in the USDA program that provides free produce to food pantries. Finally, clients are not allowed to choose the food they receive except for the odd or irregular food that are not normally available.
- Pantry is located in an old church which requires clients to climb two flights of stairs to receive food. Also, it makes unloading food deliveries very difficult. Many of the volunteers are older and have bad backs. It also requires a large amount of volunteers (20-25) to unload effectively.

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- Efficient management of donations- it appears that money is being used to purchase non-food items which is not allowed in the policies. It also appears that more food is being purchased locally at market prices rather than from the regional food bank at a significantly reduced price.
- Hours of operation are Monday, Tuesday and Friday from 9-11am and 1-3pm. This does not allow for those who are working during the day to receive food assistance.
- The director is confident that the network that exists among the population that is in need of assistance is adequate to get the word out about NAFB. Interaction with volunteers appeared to be inconsistent and unorganized. While many others have commented on the efficiency of that network, given the changes in the make-up of people needing assistance, there is a large part of that population that has never needed assistance before and therefore are not part of the network. Those people need to be served as well.

Many of these problems appeared to result from the same source, the location. At the same time we were discussing these issues, the family of one of the group members was looking to do something in memory of their grandparents that had passed. They had a passion for feeding people, so doing something for the food pantry would be a great tribute to them. While that is their motivation, they did not indicate that they would require naming rights or recognition. Many of the family members owned their own businesses, and approached this project in the same way they would analyze a business opportunity. We decided to together embark on a needs assessment to see what other area food pantries are doing and how NAFB could be improved to better serve its clients. I worked with fellow group members to organize visits to

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other area food pantries, answer any questions they had about the NAFB, research hunger issues and initiatives, and possible locations that would better suit the regular activities of the NAFB.

Process

A. Problem statement

The problem that this project addresses is, are we doing everything we can to serve the clients of the NAFB, maintain their dignity, and provide them with whatever they need to get them out of their current crisis. This paper tries to answer the question of whether following the process introduced in Development Management I, which is more formal and structured, would have lead to a better outcome.

B. Needs assessment

The group set out to visit two area food pantries, the Plymouth-Shiloh Cooperative in Shiloh, OH and Care and Share in Sandusky, OH. While assisting with the national Point-in-Time survey, I visited the food pantry in Shiloh and was impressed by their operations. The director, Rose Jaeckin, and I discussed how they got to where they are today distributing not only food, but clothing and baby items as well. Her attitude is such that you can't tell her she can't do something. If there is a need, they are going to figure out how to meet it. Shiloh being a rural area about 20 minutes from Norwalk, would have many similarities with our clients and needs, so they would be a good group to learn from.

Care and Share was suggested to us by our contact at Second Harvest. They had recently moved into a new location. We were hoping to get a better idea of what goes into a relocation

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and financial requirements that go along with it. Care and Share appeared to have a very well run organization with a staff of dedicated volunteers.

These meetings not only allowed us and the potential donor family to see what is possible, but we were all encouraged that what we were thinking about doing was not only possible but needed. We were given insider information on how the system of food assistance works. You could tell that these people interacted with and really knew their clients. Their needs were placed first. They were not satisfied by going through the motions and just working within the constraints of the current system.

In addition, we visited Second Harvest, our regional food bank through Feeding America. There we learned about all the programs that we could be participating in, toured the facility, and saw how they distribute the food. We were told about a past opportunity in Norwalk to relocate the NAFB that was not acted upon. It was very apparent that Second Harvest was a resource that NAFB was not taking full advantage of.

Complementarily, Feeding America published their *Hunger in America 2010* report and interactive *Map the Meal Gap* tool that highlighted the need in our community and the best practices of food pantries nationally. Reporting that 93% of pantries use volunteers and 68% are run entirely by volunteers (Feeding America, 2010, p. 13). This was a vital statistic to have as the food pantry would be moving from a paid CAC staff to a volunteer staff.

The largest gap that existed in our needs assessment was that we were not able to interact with the clients of the NAFB. Current operations of the food pantry did not provide us opportunities to assist with food distributions. Due to the nature of what we were researching,

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we did not receive much cooperation from the current director of NAFB. A few of the members of the group interacted with potential clients in other capacities outside of NAFB, so those experiences, speaking with other food pantries that were in touch with their clients' needs, and relevant studies were used to fill the gaps as best as possible.

Through our research meetings, we learned of many opportunities that the NAFB was not taking advantage of. Plymouth-Shiloh Cooperative participated in the USDA produce program by holding weekly farmers markets out in the communities they serve. Both Plymouth-Shiloh and Care and Share have different versions of a Client Choice program. One provides a list of available items and clients select what they want from the list and a volunteer packages it for them. At the other pantry, clients are given a list that corresponds to the number of members in their household. Then they shop with a volunteer who has a counter to keep track of how many items they have taken.

Care and Share was run more like a business with their executive director receiving a salary. Their processes were well-defined and documented. While its director was passionate and committed to the cause, it was clear that in his absence the pantry would continue to run without any disruptions. Plymouth-Shiloh while well-run was less formal. It appeared that its operations were highly-dependent on their director. Her drive made the Cooperative what it is and without her pushing volunteers and donors they would not be able to do all that they were currently doing.

Second Harvest opened our eyes to the opportunities to increase the amount of food that we receive from them without a large increase in costs. We were under the impression that we were

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not able to get more than one delivery per month which we found out was not true. Food pantries are able to get deliveries twice a month. If you are willing to pick food up, you can get bread items and produce practically every day depending on availability. These items are also free of charge. It also gave us a better understanding of how ordering works and what goes into their assortment boxes.

In addition, we had great discussions about what their member food pantries are doing. Client Choice programs are the new best practice. There is one pantry that is located in a closet and even they run a choice program. So, space is not an excuse. Many pantries are also running a backpack program to provide food to children over the weekend when they are not receiving school lunch.

As a result of our needs assessment, we determined that while the clients were receiving food, they were not receiving all the services that are available. It also appeared that there are things that can be done to encourage the clients' dignity. Together with the potential donor family, we thought with a new location and more focused leadership and management the NAFB would be able to implement many of the things that other area food pantries were already doing.

Insights from all of our visits were combined into a "strategic plan." The donor family put forth a proposal to provide a new location, as well as an allowance for utilities and money to purchase larger items that would be needed. Both of these documents were presented to the Board of Directors at their regular meeting.

The Board was very divided on the proposal. It became apparent that the relationship between the NAFB and the CAC that is running day-to-day operations had become intertwined

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and the line dividing the two separate organizations is very gray. Some very difficult conversations were had between the director, who is very against the idea and members of the board who were in favor of our proposal. It is important to note that the director would not continue with the organization if a move occurred as her job is to run the Community Action Committee. The resistance of the director led her to not be forthcoming with information and rethink her decision to ask for help running NAFB during the busy times of the CAC.

Following the meeting with the NAFB Board, a meeting was schedule with the local ministerial association. Given our understanding that NAFB was founded by the local churches, we felt that we should meet with them to better understand their role and gather their opinions about our proposal. What we found out at the meeting was that the churches had minimal involvement in the operations of the food pantry besides being major providers of food and monetary donations. It appeared that they did not have an interest in taking a more active role. They did seem to understand the need for a location change and had positive comments about the proposal.

In addition, the pastor of the Alliance Church, which also runs a food pantry that distributes once a month, discussed the need they see. Often people are lined up an hour or two before distribution begins. He also expressed some concerns about sustainability of their food pantry. The gentleman that runs it is 84 years old and they need to start thinking about what will happen when he can no longer continue in his role. While the pastor had not talked to him directly about it, he mentioned the possibility of a merger between their food pantry and NAFB.

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Partnering and/or consolidating with other food pantries was something that we had discussed multiple times. To us, it seemed that there were advantages and disadvantages to it. Consolidating donations would require less volunteers and less stops for clients, as well as ensure that there was always food to distribute as long as donors continued to contribute. Unfortunately, for many clients, one supply of three days' worth of food is not enough, so they go to multiple food pantries throughout the month. Consolidating would eliminate that opportunity. If that is the direction that the food pantries decide to take, that would need to be taken into consideration and compensated for.

Analysis

The purpose of this capstone is to compare the process detailed above to the process laid out in Development Management I and evaluate whether or not the result would have been more positive following the other approach. The analysis includes four key informant interviews with three members of the group that worked on the proposal and my supervisor for my capstone. These key informants were chosen because of their consistent commitment, their background and experience and the varying roles that they played in the process.

Key informant K is a NAFB board member and really led the charge from within to get the bylaws written and relocate the food pantry. Key informant C is a current volunteer who helps organize food orders and deliveries. She has also volunteered to be the Director of NAFB if it moves to a new location. Key informant P was my capstone supervisor. She is a very involved with the assistance community in Norwalk and the surrounding counties. Key informant R is a member of the potential donor family that proposed to provide a new location

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for NAFB as well as a member of the other small group. Key informant K, C and R are all members of Constant Seekers.

In each interview, we discussed the informant's role in the process, how they recall the process occurring, how they felt during that process, and what they would have done differently. Then we reviewed the process that was set forth in Development Management I (Figure 1) discussing whether or not we completed each step and if they would have enhanced our final product. Specifically, would having followed this process had an impact on our result. Given the progress that has been made since the proposal, we concluded the interview by looking forward to the things that would need to be done if the Board voted for relocation and how they would like to participate in those efforts.

1. Identify the Problem- Need to be able to identify it and explain why it is a problem
2. Formative Research- Primary resource research, key informant interviews, positive deviants, appreciative inquiry
 - a. Understand the needs
 - b. Understand the constraints
 - c. Understand the assets
 - d. Identify partners
 - e. Understand social and political environment
 - f. Identify available resources
 - g. Identify causality*
 - h. Identify target*
3. Planning Frameworks- Results Chain, Log frame, setting objectives, Budgeting, Gantt Chart?
4. Identifying Challenges and Constraints, Risks and potential mitigators
5. Identify potential alternative approaches
6. Develop an Exit Strategy
7. Develop support systems for project- training needed? operational changes required?
8. Monitoring and Evaluation- What do you want to know? what will you measure? How will you measure it?

Figure 1: Development Management I Process

It was very clear that of the three informants directly involved in the project, none of them had participated in a project like this before. “No. Never. And at times it was very scary and at times it still is.” But they were very clear about why they got involved with the project. “Two things. I think first of all, because I was a member on the Board of the food bank, I had some knowledge and feeling of the lack that was in that organization. The lack of service to the clients there and also because of some of the things that we had studied in that group, that bible study group, that just made me realize that I needed to do more than just read about it and talk

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about it. Put action to the words.” Another mentioned that, “I think initially it came about because of a book we were reading. It was a book about the poor. I’m a person more of action as opposed to let’s just talk about this.” Informant R talked about the interest her family had in doing something in memory of their parents/grandparents.

For informant R in particular, her role in the group and the family served many purposes. She described her role within the family as “convincing them all.” Having a foot in both groups allowed things to move more quickly because she could answer many of the family’s questions having already been involved in discussions in the small group. Informant K spoke to another advantage of the family involvement. “The most useful part of the project was the conversations and input from the family members that were truly passionate about this project.” Informant R’s participation allowed that to happen.

Looking back on the project, they were asked what they were feeling while going through the process. One responded, “I don’t think we really realized what all was involved in a project of this magnitude. And that comes from lack of experience in that kind of project, I think.” Another mentioned fear. She had seen others’ commitments fade as the project moved along. In addition, “I’m taking on the role of director with the fear of not knowing how overwhelmed I will be or how qualified I am to take care of that.” Yet another described her confidence allowing her to feel “positive about it knowing it needed to be done and there was a real need for it.” Informant R also mentioned some the concern of the family “Wanting to make sure it is something that’s real, not so much worried about the investment as much as worried about it falling through, being we were doing it for the parents, for the grandparents.”

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When asked about what we could have done differently, I got a variety of responses. Informant P, who was not directly involved in the project commented on the approach we took. “Part of what I found very refreshing about all this was that you and then your group just were gun ho and pretty idealistic. And I say that because people who work in systems tend to get very bogged down and encumbered by the realities or seeing them as threats instead of opportunities.” She continued that NAFB would not be considered broken, but that does not mean that it could not be improved or do more.

One informant felt that the project progressed the way that it was supposed to. “It is what it is and we move forward from where we’re at. We got through the obstacles the best we knew how. And no, I think we put our best foot forward and it is where it’s at because that’s where it’s meant to be right now.” Along those same lines, another informant stated, “I guess probably the only thing we messed up on was maybe we should have checked more with them [the Board] when we first started to make sure they really wanted us to go ahead with this. But maybe if we would have done that, they would have said no and we would have just forgot it.”

Another mentioned that the meeting where we presented the proposal to the Board could have been handled differently. “I think the one meeting where all of us, or several of us went, I think that would have gone better if just I had gone and presented it. Or not more than one other person with me. I think some of them felt almost attacked or ganged up on. And that wasn’t our intention. I felt we came across that way.” The one positive from that meeting was that it got the attention of the regional director of the CAC who attended the following meeting. One of the informants called it the “ugly meeting.” Up until that point, group and board members did not have a good understanding of the relationship between the NAFB and CAC. “I guess for me it

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was the difficulty in moving the food bank based on not knowing how the CAC truly felt about it.” Two of the informants mentioned frustration with the director as they felt that she was not being upfront with information. “She certainly in my mind isn’t the kind of person that is forthright in sharing information.”

Informant C was surprised by the lack of organization of the board. She suggested that knowing that information she would have suggested that “we probably should have gotten the bylaws and the Board in order before we got all these things rolling.” When presenting the proposal, “I think what we failed to realize was where the Board was at in comparison to where we were at.” After the proposal, the Board did decide to meet on their own outside of the CAC to write bylaws. She felt that through that process, the Board realized how much work needed to be done and that the space was posing challenges to the operation of NAFB.

After we talked through the process that we went through, we talked through the Development Management I process. In addition to going through the process, I also completed a Results Chain Conceptual Framework (Appendix A) and a Decision Tool Table (Appendix B) that each informant was given prior to the interview to review. All informants thought that the tools laid out the information very well. They did express concerns that we would not have been able to complete these because we did not have all the information. “I think it may have been more difficult to gather some of this information based on the resistance. Had we initially gone in with the questions about ‘How do you?’ and ‘What do you do?’, I think there may have been more resistance in getting the answers.”

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Another informant really questioned whether we would have been able to put these tools together. “Would you have known what the questions were without knowing what the problem[s] were?” She felt that given what she had known at the time, we proceeded as we felt appropriate. “Where the stalls came from, the roadblocks we met were ok for me because it was almost a bit of a breather. So I think that the pauses and difficulties came up where they needed to.” They did not know the roadblocks we were going to face and it was through our efforts that the constraints were revealed.

A third informant felt that it may have been easier for the Board to see where we were going with the proposal versus the “strategic plan” that we provided. “This is nice because it’s very simple and easy to read and it pretty much tells you what you need to do.”

As stated earlier, we did not have access to clients through the NAFB. In the interviews, we discussed positive deviants and what they could bring to the process. Informant K felt that “knowing how people are able to not come back would enable to better serve those that did come back.” It would impact the information that was shared with clients. Knowing that what worked for one client may not work for another. In reference to the clients, informant R asked, “has anybody ever asked them what they like to eat?”

Consequently, it led some informants to talk about the quality of service that’s being provided to clients and accountability of the organizations that are providing it. “You can ask and get feedback, but until you have an understanding that it’s the relationship that you have with the people you serve and to have a relationship means understanding the individual. Then how do you know you’ve made the desired impact?” Another mentioned, the difficulty in even

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talking with clients as there is little space or privacy available for discussions. By not having access to clients, let alone building a relationship with them, it is very difficult to understand what their needs are and what NAFB can do to help them meet those needs.

The next step in the process is to identify alternative approaches. Informant K felt “you need to [identify alternatives] otherwise you’re really not committed to the project. If you’re not ultimately concerned about bettering the service to the clients, then you’ve got no business doing it.” Informant R felt we tried to look at alternatives, but there were some things that could not be overcome. “That’s kind of what they threw at us in the beginning. Why can’t we make something out of the area we have? But the main thing with that building is the handicap accessibility is so bad. And there just isn’t any space.”

When it came to developing an exit strategy, each informant seemed to look at it a bit differently. Informant P stressed the importance of the sustainability of the project. “Sustainability for when the initial support is no longer there and then leadership.” Planning for departures that will inevitably happen. Informant C mentioned an exit strategy if the Board rejects the idea to relocate. In her mind that would involve figuring out how to make some of the changes that we were seeking at the current location. When asked about planning for the exit of key members of NAFB, such as the director or treasurer, she felt “that all needed to be put into place for the food bank regardless of whether we moved it or not.” Informant K did not feel that our group should exit out of the project, but did admit that individual’s commitments may change for a variety of reasons. That is something for which we should be prepared. We also discussed how to exit out of the current location. She cited the great need for communication with clients, with volunteers, and with donors.

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In terms of monitoring and evaluation, the informants were mixed on what they felt would be important to measure. One informant was very concerned about numbers. Her passion is health and nutrition. She would want to know if clients are making healthier food choices. Has there been an improvement to any physical ailments? Also, if given the opportunity to pay it forward, how many clients participate in those efforts. Another informant focused on determining whether or not the need exists and if the current actions of NAFB are meeting that need. Measuring personal interaction through a consistent presence during food distribution was suggested by another informant. Yet another informant focused on surveying the clients after the food pantry had been moved a couple months to see if there had been a positive impact for them. Continuing to evaluate year after year to ensure that the improvements are sustained and increased.

After reviewing the whole process, Informant P felt that presenting this process to the group in the beginning would have turned them off of the project. “I think first some of the women would have reacted, ‘Ohh... not interested.’ ‘Ohh... that’s too cumbersome.’ Let’s just do it. Cause people don’t like to change systems, they just want to do.” One informant confirmed that statement when asked how she would have felt if we had started using this process by responding, “I’d have been totally lost.”

As to whether or not following the Development Management process would have changed the result of the project, Informant P responded, “I think you would have approached the Board and the whole situation quite differently. And it could have ended up at the same place, but it might not have been met with as much resistance in the initial stages. But I don’t think your outcome would have been drastically different.” That opinion was consistent with

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other informants. They did not feel that, given the constraints, anything different we would have done would not have given us a different end result. One cited the coinciding of the group's and the family's interest in the project having a bigger impact on the result than the process that we followed.

Finally, when asked if they would continue with the project if the Board determined they wanted to move forward with the relocation, the informants would continue. One responded, "I'll see it to the bitter end." Another informant said, "I think I'd want to get more involved than I am now. I think I'd want to be hands on and have my little job that I did there."

A. Self-Analysis

As I look back on the work that we have done, I can think of many things that I wish we would have done differently as discussed below, but I am proud of the work that we have done. While I have participated in large projects in the past, my role was supportive and the stakes were not as high. In this project, I served the role of project coordinator. I made suggestions to the group of places to visit, helped organize visits, answered questions where I could or directed them to the appropriate person, researched trends in food pantries, and worked with the ladies to develop the proposal.

Prior to this project, I had very little involvement in NAFB having just recently learned that the food pantry even existed. My first experience at a food pantry was at the Plymouth-Shiloh Cooperative. I was very impressed by their operations and that is why that was one of the locations that we visited during our research.

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Our approach was more informal but I felt it was appropriate for this project. Given the experience of those involved in the group, we started simple, but were open as things were revealed to us. As the potential donor family got involved, they were very business-like in their approach and added more formality to our process as well as rounded out our analysis. Having more people involved really gave me comfort, as I was chartering new territory and a little nervous about leading a group of people that were all my elders.

In terms of an opportunity that we should have taken advantage of, I wish we visited the food pantries in Norwalk. Many of these are much smaller or distribute less frequently, they might have been able to provide insight into clients' needs. It would have also been an opportunity to start building relationships with those area food pantries, start building a community. We are all trying to meet the same need. We should have made a better effort to find out what other options were available to those in our town. One of the food distributions, Angel Food Ministries, was recently shut down, so there is one less resource available.

From my perspective, I was very surprised by the director's reaction to our proposal. Up until we shared it with the Board, I was under the impression that they were interested in exploring alternatives to the current operations. At that meeting, I was really taken aback by the resistance that we received from the director and some of the Board members. Other members were not as shocked as I was, so it may be that we needed to be better at sharing information among ourselves. I also feel that if we worked on completing the decision tool, it would have revealed some of constraints that became apparent after the proposal. Some things like the interconnectedness of the CAC and NAFB and the feelings of the regional director probably would not have been revealed until there was a legitimate threat to that relationship.

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In terms of whether or not following the process laid out in Development Management I would have been beneficial to this project, I cannot answer confidently one way or the other. Informant P suggested that it may have intimidated the small group of ladies I was working with and I am inclined to agree with her. It is important to not only know the audience you are working for, but also who you are working with. As this was the first project of this kind for everyone involved, I feel that a more simplified process was appropriate. With my responsibilities as project coordinator, I could have and feel I should have attempted to incorporate more of the Development Management process where I felt it could have enhanced what we were doing.

After completing the Results Chain Framework and the Decision Tool, I felt both of those tools would have been assets to us in a couple ways. First, we would have looked for constraints and been prepared to deal with them when we ran up against them. Not that we would have been able to identify them all, as previously mentioned. Secondly, the results chain framework would have helped organize our pitch to the Board, by outlining what we were planning to put into NAFB, what activities we were planning to do, and the benefits we expected to see. I do not feel that our proposal lays those things out as clearly.

Some of the more future-oriented steps, such as developing an exit strategy and potential training needs, would have been good things to have in our back pockets. It may have given more strength to our proposal, knowing that we had already thought about those things and the Board would not have to figure them out. But the uncertainty of not knowing whether or not they had interest in moving forward caused those things to not be included in the process. That will be an area where a lot of attention will be paid, if the Board does decide to relocate.

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As far as my role in the project, I felt that I was balancing quite a few things. Leading this group of ladies, often called for me to step back and let them go. I was very happy to do that. I set up meetings and did much of the writing, then brought everyone together to give their stamp of approval to our work. Often times, there were questions that I was not able to answer and had to defer to another member of our group. As a leader, that was not always easy as I felt I should know the answers.

This project provided me an opportunity to see how I deal with resistance in the response from some of the Board members and director. When we first met with resistance at the Board meeting, my “SIT alarm” went off and I went into self-reflection mode. I was really concerned with going forward with this given those that are intimately involved do not feel it is necessary. I came to realize that in some cases they were not that intimately involved, and in others, they were so involved, that they could not see things operating any other way. While it is still an area of needed improvement for me, my continued involvement with NAFB has given me opportunities to learn how to not let that hold me back.

Conclusion

Since the proposal was presented to the Board, changes have been taking place. The Board found that they did not have any by-laws. A sub-committee spent most of the summer working on creating by-laws which were passed at the October Board meeting. The bylaws set out the number of members on the Board to nine and require a client to be on the Board. They are currently seeking a client to participate. It also lays out the responsibilities of the Service Director, who is not a voting member of the Board.

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The purpose of NAFB has been simplified to:

1. Address issues of poverty and hunger
2. Acquire, store, and distribute food
3. Identify other food sources for clients
4. Provide families with food preparation and nutrition information
5. Work cooperatively with other agencies

There also seems to be a change in the attitude of the Board. Some of the members that were opposed to the proposal have either moved on or become less active. Others have stepped up to take a more active role by picking up food at local grocery stores or being there during food deliveries. There is still some resistant, but it is hard to deny the difficulties of the space. On a Monday in October, the food bank had a record day, with 46 families coming in to receive food. The increasing need is apparent in the declining budget and increase in the number of deliveries during the month.

The Board voted on the proposal from the family at their December meeting. They approved the proposal! It appears that patience has paid off in this project. As we move forward, we can put into practice the learning that was revealed in this research. The team that will be working together will be much bigger and more diverse. Adjusting to this will be tricky, but setting out a plan, members' commitments and expectations at the start should help avoid some of the issues that may arise in this new situation.

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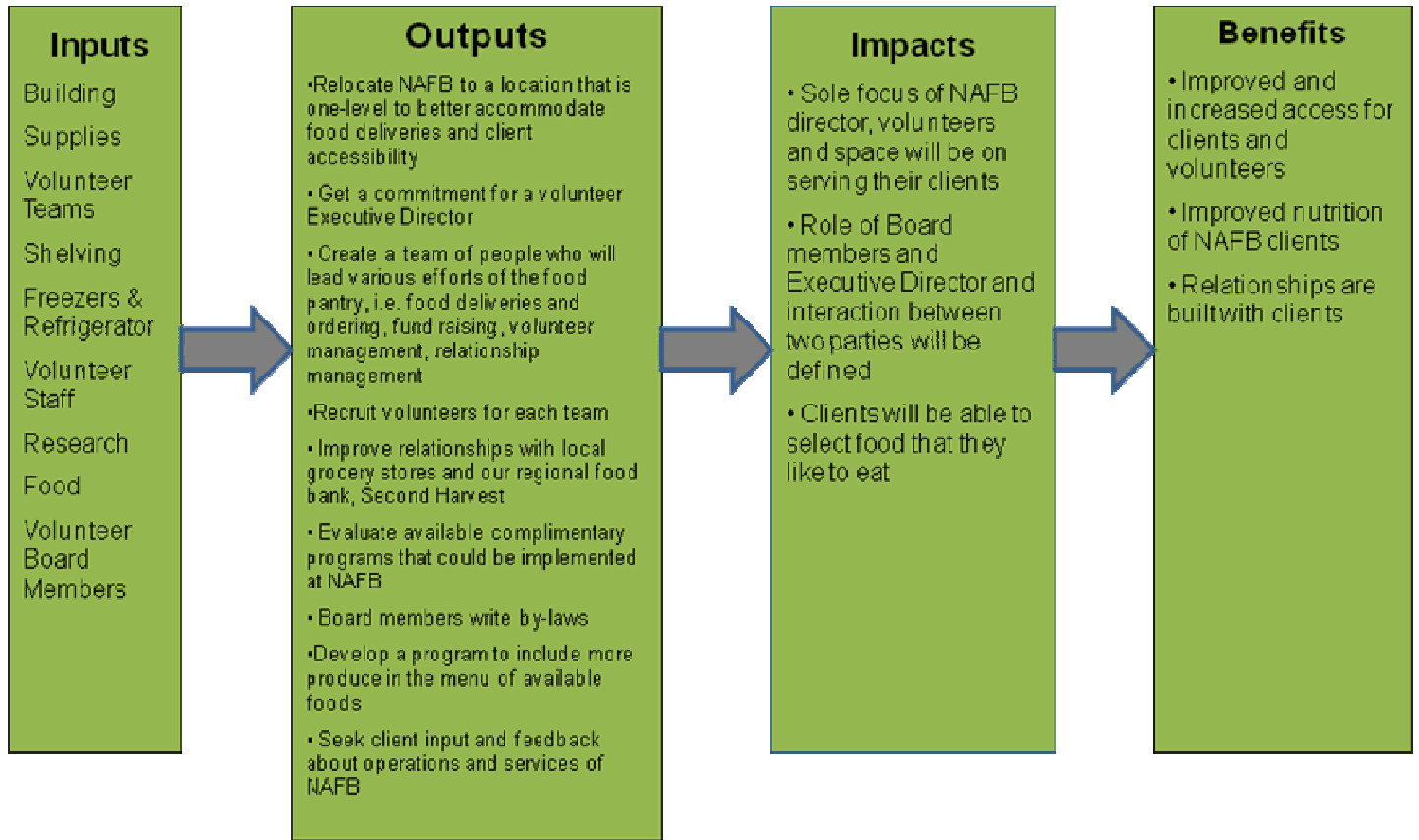
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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: NAFB Relocation



Appendix B

Goal	Practices to Promote	Practices at NAFB	Facilitating conditions for behavior change	Constraints that may affect capacity for behavior change
<p>> Provide increased access to food for clients, both physical access and hours open</p>	<p>> Relocation to a new space without steps and with adequate space for storage and distribution</p> <p>> Modify the distribution hours to accommodate the working poor</p>	<p>> Positive: Do provide food if someone comes in during non-distribution times</p> <p>> Positive: Conveyor is available to assist with unloading of food delivery</p> <p>> Positive: NAFB members do take food out to car for those who cannot make it up the steps in the building</p> <p>> Nonoptimal: Food distribution is not available during lunch hours and after 4pm</p> <p>> Nonoptimal: Current location requires clients and food to ascend/descend two flights of stairs to receive assistance</p>	<p>> Many area food pantries have had success with different hours of distribution</p> <p>> An area food pantry recently went through a location change and has had many positive outcomes for its clients</p> <p>> Some board members see and understand the need to make changes to the location and distribution hours</p> <p>> Proposal by local family to provide location as well as funding towards monthly utilities and other needs</p>	<p>> Current organization housing and running NAFB (CAC) is resistant to change and outside help</p> <p>> Funding for CAC is based on output/performance of NAFB</p> <p>> Concern about staffing and finances involved in relocation</p> <p>> Some board members do not see the need to change what they are currently doing</p>

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		<p>> Nonoptimal: Layout of shelving and distribution room limits inventory and ability to increase menu of food available</p> <p>> Not enough information: What is the best time for clients to receive distributions from NAFB?</p>		
Goal	Practices to Promote	Practices at NAFB	Facilitating conditions for behavior change	Constraints that may affect capacity for behavior change
<p>> Provide more nutritious options for clients</p>	<p>> Participation in USDA program that provides free produce to food pantries</p> <p>> Active participation in Norwalk Community Garden</p> <p>> Modifying menu of available foods to clients</p> <p>> Provide taste testing and recipes for clients to encourage them to eat more nutritious meals</p>	<p>> Positive: Some produce from the Norwalk Community Garden was taken to the NAFB</p> <p>> Nonoptimal: Continue to receive assortment boxes from Second Harvest that often contain non-nutritious items</p> <p>> Nonoptimal: Do not participate in USDA produce program</p>	<p>> Other area food pantries participate in USDA program with much success</p> <p>>Norwalk Community Garden would provide ripe, local produce throughout the summer</p> <p>> Volunteers are willing to provide recipes and taste tests for clients</p> <p>> Occasionally a recipe will be printed out for unusual foods that are received, i.e. dried figs</p>	<p>> Director is not interested in participating in USDA program due to the inconsistent quality of produce</p> <p>> Director is not interested in modifying menu of available foods</p> <p>> Space and unwillingness to have additional help with distribution does not allow for taste testing</p> <p>> Increase in the number of clients in recent months has used up resources that could go towards increasing the amount of food that each client receives</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Increase participation with Second Harvest through more frequent deliveries and picking up food when it is needed and available > Increase amount of food distributed to approximately 5 days' supply 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Volunteers are willing to pick up food at Second Harvest 	
Goal	Practices to Promote	Practices at NAFB	Facilitating conditions for behavior change	Constraints that may affect capacity for behavior change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Provide a welcoming environment to clients where they felt respected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Recruit volunteers that are dedicated solely to the NAFB > Seek client input into the operations and available options at NAFB > Provide a pleasant demeanor and willing listening ear wherever necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Positive: There are two ladies that focus solely on NAFB distribution > Positive: Many in the CAC office are knowledgeable about other assistance that clients may be eligible for > Positive: Because NAFB is housed with the CAC, clients can receive both 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Client Choice program has been successful in other area food pantries > Other pantries have utilized client feedback and suggestions to improve their services showing clients' willingness to participate > Many people have expressed interest in volunteering in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Director is not interested in expanding to a Client Choice program > During HEAP season, director is very busy and not able to devote much time to NAFB > There is an unwillingness to change and adapt to the evolving needs of

Appendix B

	<p>> Educate volunteers on options available to clients for additional assistance, so they can be knowledge resources for clients as well</p> <p>>Implement Client Choice program</p>	<p>services at the same location</p> <p>> Nonoptimal: From October 1 to March 31st the office is very busy and crowded with HEAP applicants</p> <p>> Nonoptimal: There is no interest in expanding the current client choice table that includes the odds and ends donations that are received</p>	<p>various capacities</p>	<p>the NAFB clients</p>
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