Planning and Designing a Sustainable Volunteer Based Organization: The Putney Food Shelf

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PLANNING AND DESIGNING A SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEER BASED ORGANIZATION: THE PUTNEY FOOD SHELF

Annik Yvette Paul
PIM 69

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

Capstone Seminar Start Date: May 25, 2012
Advisor: Charlie Curry-Smithson
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“O God, to those who have hunger, give bread, and to us who have bread, give the hunger for justice.”
A Prayer from Latin America

“If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one.”
Mother Teresa
Dedication and Acknowledgements

I dedicate this paper to all the people who are committed to working on reducing the prevalence of food insecurity. I also dedicated it to all the people who are food insecure; may you be treated with respect and dignity during your times of need.

I would like to acknowledge the following people for constantly reminding me why I decided to pursue my Master’s degree. I am eternally grateful and humbled to have had this experience.

- To the Putney Community for making me feel so welcome, as if I had lived in Putney my entire life.
- To Transition Town Putney for working so diligently to develop a resilient community by simply listening and encouraging.
- To everyone involved with the Putney Food Shelf Volunteers for his or her time and tireless energy spent supporting a sustainable volunteer based organization.
- To Paul LeVasseur, my practicum supervisor, for teaching me to “honor their strengths and value their eccentricities”.
- To Caitlin Williams, my practicum buddy, for being a constant ear and someone to commiserate with during the second phase of graduate school.
- To my SIT support group, Allison, Dinah, Dawn, Heather, and Jill, for their many words of encouragement and advice.
- To Matt, my partner and constant supporter, even when I was not motivated, you were always encouraging.
- To my family for always believing in my ability to accomplish my dreams.
- And, to Charlie Curry-Smithson, my capstone advisor, for advising me “anything worth doing, is worth doing.”
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List of Abbreviations

CLC – Course-Linked Capstone

CSFP - Commodity Supplemental Food Program

Dropbox – An online “cloud” for shared document storage (Dropbox.com)

FAQ – Frequently Asked Question

iPutney – A local online website for community news and information (iPutney.com)

PCC – Putney Community Center

PCS – Putney Central School

PFS – Putney Food Shelf

PIG – Putney Interagency Group

PTO – Parent Teacher Organization

SEVCA – Southeastern Vermont Community Action

SNAP/3Squares VT – Supplemental Nutrition Access Program (formally food stamps)

TTP – Transition Town Putney

U.S. / USA – United States of America

USDA – United States Department of Agriculture

VFB – Vermont Foodbank

VSJF – Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

VT – Vermont

WIC – Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
Abstract

There are many reasons why issues of food insecurity and hunger exist. Individuals, families, and households have various barriers to food security, often facing more than one at a time. Barriers include limited fixed incomes, minimum wage not equaling a livable wage, unemployment and underemployment, poverty, lack of personal transportation and/or access to public transportation, limited access to shopping areas (food deserts), and health and medical issues.

Considering the current statistics listed below, combined with the ever-increasing cost of food, more households will be struggling to meet their basic nutritional needs. Food insecurity and hunger is a problem faced by many, including Vermonters, and for this reason, the need for the Putney Food Shelf exists.

- 14.5% of all U.S. households struggle to meet their daily nutritional needs at some point within a year (USDA, 2/23/12).
- 4.8% of all U.S. households (5.6 million households) accessed emergency food from a food pantry one or more times in 2010 (USDA, 2/23/12).
- 5% of Vermont households visit a food shelf or community meal site in a typical month, which includes 12,290 children (VSJF, 2/23/12).
- 21% of Vermont’s children below the age of 18 live in food insecure households (Hunger Free Vermont, 2/23/12).
- 32% of Vermonters cannot afford either enough food or nutritious food (Hunger Free Vermont, 2/23/12).
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This capstone paper looks at the planning and design process undergone by the Putney Food Shelf beginning in 2010 and continuing through the present day. The purpose of this research project was to design a plan to support a sustainable, volunteer based, social service agency after identifying the needs of the food shelf recipients, the food shelf organizers, and the community. The intent of this paper was to utilize the guidelines for a Course-Linked Capstone (CLC) for Development Management I: Project Planning and Design by creating a document to guide the organization during this transitional phase. This document is collectively important as both an understanding of the project development that occurred from September 2010 to March 2012 and as a historical record for the PFS steering committee.
I. Introduction

During my childhood, and intermittently throughout my adulthood, my family has had to depend on the services of local food shelves to put food on the table. Growing up in a food insecure household, my family struggled to provide nutritional meals on a regular basis. As a child, I felt embarrassed to be poor and need food assistance. I remember to this day how humiliating it was to have my mom order hamburgers at the local fast food restaurant, thereby saving a few cents by supplying our own cheese. As an adult, I have felt like a failure having to explain to food shelf volunteers why I could not afford to buy groceries. One experience was so humiliating I left crying before even receiving any food items. My passion for food justice, equalized food access and nutritious affordable choices for all, stems from these experiences.

As an intern with Transition Town Putney (TTP), I wanted to focus my attention on food issues. Although my practicum with TTP connected me with the Putney Food Shelf (PFS) and they encouraged my efforts of supporting a community organization, my practicum responsibilities were indirectly related to my work with the PFS.

The idea was that I, acting as a direct connection to TTP resources, would support the needs of the PFS without pressuring or demanding immediate change, providing assistance not taking-over. The objective was to have changes occur organically from within the organization rather than from outside the organization. I believe I fulfilled my role by providing encouragement, acting as a link for resources, taking on the behind the scenes organizing and identifying potential solutions to the issues recognized as needs.

Paul LeVasseur, my TTP practicum supervisor, introduced me to Matthew Wright and Gino Palmeri, the two original organizers of the PFS within days of starting my internship. TTP had just held the community forum on the PFS and it became evident that Matthew and Gino had
more people interested in volunteering then they knew what to do with. After I asked them how I could support them during this transition period brought on by the TTP forum I immediately went to work creating a volunteer application. This was the beginning.

This capstone paper looks at the planning and design process undergone by the Putney Food Shelf beginning in 2010 and continuing through the present day. The purpose of this research project was to design a plan to support a sustainable, volunteer based, social service agency after identifying the needs of the food shelf recipients, the food shelf organizers, and the community. The intent of this paper was to utilize the guidelines for a Course-Linked Capstone (CLC) for Development Management I: Project Planning and Design by creating a document to guide the organization during this transitional phase. This document is collectively important as both an understanding of the project development that occurred from September 2010 to March 2012 and as a historical record for the PFS steering committee.

Research question: How would I design a project to address the needs of the Putney Food Shelf as identified in a community forum sponsored by Transition Town Putney?

II. Context

Background

The Putney Food Shelf (PFS) has provided emergency food assistance to residents of Putney and surrounding towns for more than seven years. Originally housed in the Genesis Church of the Brethren, Nora Zellmer initially operated the food shelf. In 2009, Nora posted an advertisement looking for food shelf volunteers at the Putney Friends Meetinghouse; Matthew Wright and Gino Palmeri both responded and soon began volunteering. However, shortly thereafter, the Genesis Church ceased to exist and the food shelf needed to find a new location.
Prior to relocating, Nora stepped down as organizer. Trained and already actively involved in the daily operations, Matthew and Gino were a natural fit to adopt the undertakings of the food shelf. Their first task was securing a small space to house the food shelf in the Putney Community Center (PCC). The PCC board of directors informally agreed to adopt the PFS and act as the fiscal sponsor. Additionally, in support of the community and the PFS, the PCC offered to donate the use of space, including utilities, at no charge indefinitely. During this period, very little information was documented (G. Palmeri & M. Wright, personal communication, March 12, 2012).

The PCC is located at 10 Christian Square in downtown Putney, Vermont. The PFS occupies a small corner room and is handicap accessible. It comfortably fits three adults at a time, any more and it becomes overcrowded. The room houses two upright refrigerator/freezers, a chest freezer, and three shelving units for nonperishable items as seen in Figures 1 and 2. There is also a kitchen facility, bathrooms, and a meeting space that are shared spaces within the building.

Figure 1. Photograph of the Putney Food Shelf Dry Storage
The PFS hours of operation are 6 – 7 p.m. on Tuesday evenings and 9 – 10 a.m. on Saturday mornings. Because of the limited hours of operation, the PFS does not have a direct phone connection. Instead, Putney Family Services, another social service agency, allows PFS to use their phone number. Typically, Putney Family Services is able to answer any questions and forward the PFS hours of operation to the caller. However, if necessary, they will pass along the information to the PFS by contacting one of the steering committee members.

**Transition Town Putney**

First developed in Kinsale, Ireland by Rob Hopkins, the people of Totnes, England later expanded upon the Transition Town movement in 2005. Transition Towns aim to reduce a community’s dependence on fossil fuels and re-localize their food and skill structures in an effort to create community resilience in the face of economic downturns. More than 300 towns and cities around the world are responding to the triple challenges of climate change, peak oil, and
economic instability (Hopkins, 2008). Transition Town Putney (TTP) has been a part of this global movement since late 2009.

One area of focus for TTP is creating an inclusive movement that examines the food needs of ALL Putney residents. The first couple of projects undertaken by TTP had resulted from community forums and involved localizing the food system and re-learning to feed ourselves. Forums give members of the community an opportunity to discuss their ideas, needs and wants, often on a specific topic. A community garden, a local weekly summer farmers’ market, and a homesteading group are only a few of the projects that resulted from TTP sponsored forums.

Needs Assessment

On August 25, 2010, prior to my involvement with either TTP (my practicum site) or the PFS (my project site), 28 people attended a forum that was held at the Putney Public Library to raise awareness of and gain support for the PFS while examining the best way to serve the needs of the food insecure population in Putney. The goals of the forum were: 1) to explore how the community could help ensure that all of Putney’s population have access to adequate supplies of nutritionally appropriate food; 2) to identify the current needs and strengths of the PFS; and 3) to invite ideas for building on these strengths to create an even stronger and more resilient system of food distribution for those in need. TTP, in collaboration with Matthew Wright and Gino Palmeri of the PFS, organized the community forum (LeVasseur, 2010).

The first part of the forum was devoted to a series of short presentations held in a large group setting. The keynote speakers, familiar with managing food shelves, each had a few moments to speak about their experiences helping organize effective food shelves and their roles in their organization. The organizations in attendance included the Brattleboro Drop In Center,
Forum attendees split into small groups of four or five for the second part of the forum. Given twenty minutes, they discussed how the community could support the PFS and their vision of an evolving PFS. After the small group discussion, each group member received three minutes to voice his or her last comments before moving on to the next group member. At the end of the twenty minutes, the large group reconvened and each person was given a turn to say one thing that they were taking away from this forum experience.

The forum ran for nearly two hours. Fourteen people signed up to volunteer at the PFS at the end of the meeting in addition to others who committed to assist in other various ways. The responses received during the final go-round and on the forum feedback, included (LeVasseur, 2010):

- Relationships, Action, Consistency
- Inspiring success stories
- Connections made with others doing this work
- The expression of concern and willingness to help those in need
- That so many people showed up to take this problem to heart
- New ideas expressed for how to make the Putney Food Shelf even better
- The importance of setting up a safe, inviting and comfortable family type atmosphere for those working at the food shelf and receiving food there
- Increased exuberance in the community
- The sense of community among those in the room
- The opportunity to contribute to our community
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• Seeing so many people willing to help
• Hearing the collective wisdom
• Recognizing a community concern and addressing it

III. Food Insecurity & Hunger

This section includes a brief introduction to food insecurity and hunger and contains information and statistic for Putney, Windham County, Vermont, and the U.S. The data provides a means to recognize the magnitude of the issue of food insecurity and hunger while demonstrating the growing need for community food shelves.

The USDA (2011) in *Household Food Security in the United States in 2010* classifies food security as all household members having access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity 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, involves hunger, and means that one or more household members reduced their food intake and disrupted their normal eating patterns at times during the year because the household lacked money and other resources for food. Figure 3 represents the USDA’s labels used to describe and categorize the ranges of food security.
There are many reasons why issues of food insecurity and hunger exist. Individuals, families, and households have various barriers to food security, often facing more than one at a time. Barriers include limited fixed incomes, minimum wage not equaling a livable wage, unemployment and underemployment, poverty, lack of personal transportation and/or access to public transportation, limited access to shopping areas (food deserts), and health and medical issues.

The PFS steering committee can use national and local statistics as comparisons, to identify trends, and as indicator measurements that evaluate the organization. The statistics and
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information provided within these next sections answer the questions: whom does food insecurity affect and why, and who visits food shelves and where the food shelves are located.

Nationally

Nationally, 14.5% of the U.S. population struggles to meet their daily nutritional needs at some point within a year. Figure 4 further segments the population of food insecure households by identifying the households with low food security (9.1%) and households with very low food security (5.4%).

![Food Security Status of U.S. Households, 2010 (USDA, 2/23/12)](image)

**Note:** Food-insecure households include those with low food security and very low food security.


**Figure 4.** Food Security Status of U.S. Households, 2010 (USDA, 2/23/12)

Food insecurity exists in every county in the U.S. and affects all segments of the population from children, adults and seniors to those employed and unemployed. Figure 5 looks at the prevalence of food insecurity in 2010. The chart illustrates how food insecurity varies among household types. Prevalence information is important to the PFS because it identifies specific populations that the steering committee may need to inform of the existence of the food
Segments that have higher rates of food insecurity than the national average include (USDA, 2011):

- Households with incomes below the Federal poverty line ($22,113 for a family of four in 2010) – 40.2%
- Households with children, headed by a single woman – 35.1%
- Households with children, headed by a single man – 25.4%
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The effects of hunger on children can be detrimental to their health, well-being and lifelong success. Children living in food insecure homes are at greater risk for poor health, nutritional deficiencies and obesity/overweight, as well as developmental delays, poor academic achievement, depression, and increased aggressive or hyperactive behavior.

Nationally, 4.8% of all U.S. households (5.6 million households) accessed emergency food from a food shelf one or more times in 2010. In the same year, 59.2% of food insecure households participated in at least one of the three major federal food assistance programs: SNAP, The National School Lunch Program, and/or WIC (Feeding America, 2/23/12).

Statewide

Located among the New England states, Vermont resides in the northeastern part of the U.S., boarding Quebec, Canada on the north, New Hampshire on the east, Massachusetts on the south, and New York on the west. Windham County is located southeastern most corner of the state. Putney is located in the center of Windham County on the eastern border. Within the fifty states, Vermont is the second least populated and the sixth smallest by area. The 2010 U.S. Census lists Vermont’s population as 625,741, which makes up 0.20% of the total population in the U.S. (U.S. Census, 2/23/12). The majority of the state’s residents (66%) live in rural areas (less than 2,500 residents) (USDA, 2/23/12).

Figure 6 summarizes 2010 U.S. Census data for the total population living in poverty for all ages and specifically for those under 19 years of age. Although VT has a smaller percentage of the population living in poverty than the U.S., the data finds that Windham County has a greater percentage of the population living in poverty compared to the state of VT. According to the 2010 U.S. Census data, VT’s median household income is $49,393, only slightly less than the U.S. However, the median household income in Windham County is 15% less than the U.S. and
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is 13.7% less than VT as a whole (U.S. Census, 2/23/12). This type of data showing Windham County below average in comparison with the rest of the state could be useful information when looking for funding and applying for grants.

### Figure 6. Population Living in Poverty and Median Household Income - U.S., VT, and Windham County (U.S. Census, 2/23/12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All ages in poverty, 2010</th>
<th>Under age 19 in poverty, 2010</th>
<th>Median household income, in dollars, 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># in Poverty</td>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>% in Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>46,215,956</td>
<td>308,745,538</td>
<td>14.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>74,720</td>
<td>625,741</td>
<td>11.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windham County</td>
<td>5,533</td>
<td>44,513</td>
<td>12.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>$50,046</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>$43,045</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windham County</td>
<td>$43,045</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7 identifies the prevalence of food insecurity in the U.S. and categorizing states as below, near, or above the U.S. average of 14.5% over the period of 2008-2010. Vermont’s prevalence of household food insecurity averages 13.8% during this period. The percentage rates of all states range from a low of 7.1% in North Dakota to a high of 19.4% in Mississippi. Vermont is considered near the U.S. average according to this study (USDA, 2/23/12).
Figure 7. Prevalence of U.S. food insecurity by state, average 2008-2010 (USDA, 2/23/12)

Hunger Free Vermont provides several VT hunger statistics including (Hunger Free Vermont, 2/23/12):

- 27,100 children under 18 live in food insecure households (21%)
- 90,000 Vermonters of all ages live in food insecure households (15%)
- 32% of Vermonters cannot afford either enough food or nutritious food
- 12,290 Vermont children depend on food shelves each month
- 6% of all Vermont households are food insecure with hunger
- Vermont is ranked the 11th hungriest in the nation
- 1 in 6 Vermonters receive helping buying food through the 3SquaresVT/SNAP program totaling over 93,000 participants (VTDigger, 2/23/12).
Figure 8 looks at the charitable food sites specifically in Windham County and identifies countywide hunger statistics. Figure 9 identifies the charitable food sites in entire state of VT including youth, senior and other congregate meal sites, food shelves, community action agencies, and Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) drop sites and public transportation lines to access these programs. Additionally it distinguishes, by county, the percentage of the population enrolled in SNAP. The information identifying other meal sites and food shelves, if shared, could be beneficial to the food shelf recipients.

Recent surveys show that 1 in 5 Vermont children and nearly 1 in 7 Vermont households are food insecure. Join us in our efforts to end childhood hunger. Visit the Hunger Free Vermont website at hungerfreevt.org for more information on solutions to hunger and how you can help.

Hunger in Windham County

Figure 8. Charitable Food Access Sites and Hunger Statistics in Windham County (Hunger Free Vermont, 2/23/12)
In 2008, food shelves in VT spent 9.5 million dollars on food purchases to meet the needs of food insecure Vermonters (VSJF, 2/23/12). Approximately 8,200 individuals receive emergency food assistance in any given week in Vermont. Around 31,000 people, or 5% of Vermont’s population visited a food shelf or community meal site in a typical month (VSJF,
Food insecurity and hunger is a problem faced by Vermonters and more specifically those in Windham County, and for this reason, the need for the PFS exists.

Locally

The PFS is not required to collect data from the food shelf recipients. However, over the last few years, the food shelf has gathered a limited amount of data for informational purposes. In September of 2010, after receiving funds from the Town of Putney, the PFS began collecting zip code information for further analysis of the population served. When an individual or family comes to the PFS, they fill out a data card asking seven quickly answered questions. Staff is always close at hand to help with any literacy issues if necessary.

Data Collected from PFS recipients:

- Total Number of people feeding (children, adults, elderly)
- Number of children feeding
- Number of elderly feeding
- Number of household members employed
- Number of household members disabled
- Is this your first visit to the Putney Food Shelf
- What is your zip code

Because the PFS does not identify each recipient at the time of data gathering, the information collected is a cumulative total of all visits over the course of a year and includes duplicate numbers. In 2011, the PFS entered more than 950 data gathering forms, or the total number of visits, in the database. This provided supplemental food for more than 1900 individuals, of which more than 1100 were children and 95 were seniors.
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Additionally, the Brattleboro Drop In Center, the largest food shelf in Windham County, reported that in 2010, 379 unduplicated Putney residents received supplemental food assistance from their organization. This number was made up of 163 children and 216 adults (2010 Putney Town Report, 2/23/12). In the 2011 Putney Town Report the Brattleboro Drop In Center reported a 14% increase in the number of Putney residents visiting their organization from 2010 (175 children and 259 adults). Explanations as to why Putney residents visit the Brattleboro Drop In Center include:

- There is a stigma attached to receiving food assistance that can be lessened by visiting a food shelf outside your community (privacy, ability to remain anonymous)
- The hours of operation are more extensive
- Some households visit more than one food shelf per week
- More selection of food, greater variety
- Additional services are offered

IV. Methods

This paper utilizes qualitative research methods. The intent is to help an organization, struggling with multiple issues, as identified in a community forum, develop and plan a strategy to create a sustainable volunteer based organization. To ensure credibility and rigor, I gathered the information provided in this paper through multiple sources and a variety of collection methods including participant observation, document analysis, and key informant interviews. I also recognize that I am not unbiased in my analysis because of my direct involvement with this research project. Having both experienced food insecurity and having acted as an advocate on behalf of the food insecure, I recognize that my personal and professional biases influence my
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analysis. However, while I acknowledge my biases, I have continuously sought to present this paper with information based on facts.

Participant Observation

I began volunteering with the PFS September 1, 2010. During the first six months, I trained to staff the food shelf and subsequently substituted a handful of times on both Tuesdays and Saturdays. I met with Matthew and Gino individually to assess their immediate needs, began networking with local groups working on food security issues, and created the Volunteer Application. I also participated in gleaning with the VFB. This gleaning directly benefited the PFS as I was given a box of surplus vegetables after each workday. As time went by, I started inviting a community member or two to join us for a casual mini-meeting, usually over coffee at the Putney Food Cooperative. Eventually, numerous people from these mini-meetings began coming together and nine months into the project, an informal steering committee had formed. I now actively participate in the steering committee, and more specifically, with the finance subcommittee. As an active steering committee member, I relied heavily on data collected from participant observation.

Additionally, a couple of the steering committee members, including me, have participated in the VFB Network Partner orientation. The VFB orientation includes a brief overview of the benefits of being a network partner, plenty of time for questions, a detailed training on the online ordering system, and a tour of the facility. I have also assisted with the food order pick-ups and shopped for “free” items at the VFB, posted public notices on iPutney, attended Putney Interagency Group (PIG) meetings as a representative of the PFS, and so much more.
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By spending a prolonged period engaged in the activities and undertakings of the PFS, I was able to immerse myself while working on this research project. I was able to spend an extensive amount of time observing and interacting with food shelf recipients, fellow volunteers, and community members.

Document Analysis

With the financial sustainability addressed as an immediate concern, one of the first things I did was request copy of the complete financial history. The records that were available dated back to May 2009, when the PFS transferred funds from the Genesis Church of the Brethren to the PCC. I gathered all the invoices available, organized them, and reconciled to the financial records. This initial reconciliation provided information eventually used as a baseline for donations and expenses. I then created reports that would ultimately help with budget and planning.

The limited quantity of historical documents available, made interviewing and networking even more valuable. However, by searching for historical postings on iPutney, the local on-line message board, the steering committee discovered historical documentation that referenced the Putney Food Shelf going back to 2005. The majority of the posts were to solicit donations; however, a few postings included informative outreach materials. The complete list of these postings is located in the PFS’s online document sharing folder on Dropbox.

The orientation held for VFB Network Partners provided a packet of materials including a detailed account of how to place an online order, FAQ’s, catalog detailing the available trainings, and promotional materials for food shelves to display. As more volunteers participate in trainings and certifications, such as Serve Safe and Media Management, additional training
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materials are added to the growing list of organizational documents. These materials are now housed at the food shelf and available for all volunteers to access.

In addition to the documents described above, for this study, I also examined food insecurity and hunger information and statistics provided by key players in this field including the USDA, the Census, Feeding America, and Hunger Free VT. This data gathered provides an overview of the problem faced by the recipients of the Putney Food Shelf and recognizes the necessity of having a sustainable volunteer based organization.

Key Informant Interviews

To collect data for this research project, I conducted informal interviews with key players in the community, both directly and indirectly involved within the organization. I specifically conducted interviews with the PFS steering committee members, Putney community members involved with TTP, organizers of other local social service agencies, and the PCC treasurer. I informed all parties that the information collected during the interview could be included in this research paper. When given the option, all interviewees chose to participate. These informal interviews, in the form of conversations, took place over coffee at the Putney Food Cooperative, at the PCC, in interviewees’ homes, and over the phone. Although a few steering committee members are also food shelf recipients, I did not intentionally conduct interviews with food shelf recipients.

V. Findings: Problems Identified and Analyzed

The Needs Analysis conducted for this research project contains information and data gathered from the TTP forum, informal interviews with key informants, and participant observation of the PFS operations. Categorized into five areas, the findings include improving
communication, increasing human capital, developing as an organization, strengthening financial sustainability, and fostering local partnerships.

Each section to follow contains a brief introduction, the stated problem(s), the description of the problem(s), current action taken, and any recommendations for future action.

Communication

Like in most organizations, a problem area identified was communication, both internal and external. Communication, both sending and receiving messages, requires time, effort, and organization. An organization can reduce, if not eliminate, misunderstandings, miscommunication, and mistakes simply by practicing appropriate communication techniques.

**PROBLEM 1:** The PFS does not notify the food shelf recipients of changes in the regularly posted open hours.

Operating the PFS by themselves, Matthew and Gino, experienced times neither was available to open and staff the food shelf during the hours of operation. Recipients were then faced with the challenge of having to go without food or finding an alternative food shelf located outside of the community.

Food shelf volunteers trained more than ten people to act as substitutes for opening and staffing the food shelf. Steering committee members created a substitute call list and a calendar where people can sign up to work, both located at the food shelf. There are always two people schedule in case someone is not able to work his or her shift. Since the forum, the PFS has been open 100% of posted hours, even on Christmas morning Saturday, December 25, 2010!

Moving forward, I recommend that the steering committee annually review the calendar to see if holidays, worthy of closing, fall on Tuesdays or Saturdays. If so, the steering committee
THE PUTNEY FOOD SHELF

should post signs at the food shelf, verbally notify recipients, and advertise on iPutney minimally two weeks before a disruption in the regularly scheduled open hours.

**PROBLEM 2: The PFS is not publicly visible and residents are unaware of its existence.**

Part of the challenge is that the PFS has been located at the PCC for such a short time. After the location change in 2009, minimal advertising occurred beyond changing the address with the Vermont Foodbank (VFB) and posting a few messages on iPutney. Food shelf organizers notified the recipients prior to the move and placed a sign on the back door of the PCC with the PFS hours of operation. Additionally, the Brattleboro Drop In Center, another local emergency food agency, reported that Putney residents, after Brattleboro, were the second highest users of their services. This information prompted further concern that the Putney community needed enlightenment on the existence of the PFS.

After the forum, a community member donated time and supplies, building and painting a sandwich board sign that was placed on the corner of Main Street and Christian Square for increased visibility as seen in Figure 10.

![Figure 10. Photo of PFS Sandwich Board Sign](image)
Another community member donated professional graphic design services to create a promotional flyer (Appendix 1) to display at other local social service agencies and around town. He displayed the sandwich board sign, she hung the promotional flyers, and immediately after, the PFS noticed a visible increase in the number of recipients coming to the food shelf weekly. Additionally, the PFS is now regularly posting information monthly on iPutney, a local website for community news and information.

In the future, I recommend the PFS keep a list of where the promotional flyers hang around town (free clinic, therapist’s offices, PTO, Banks/Credit Unions, churches, library, PFS, post office, etc.). Periodically, volunteers should check the flyers to make sure they are still in the initial condition in which they were hung.

**Problem 3: The PFS internal communication needs have changed.**

When Matthew and Gino were the only people volunteering with the PFS, internal communication was much simpler; they could just leave a note at the food shelf, call each other and have a conversation, or send a quick email. As more people began volunteering and taking on projects outside of staffing the food shelf, it became evident that the organization needed new methods of communication.

As of April 2011, the PFS now holds regular monthly meetings on the third Tuesday of each month from 5-6 p.m., the hour before operating hours. Attended by the steering committee, meetings include community members, volunteers, and food shelf recipients; all are encouraged to attend regularly. Meeting attendance is typically around seven to twelve individuals. The meetings consist of planning, project status updates, and information sharing. The steering
committee hosted a first annual half-day planning and visioning meeting in January 2012 where the development of the organization was the focus.

I recommend the steering committee form a subcommittee, or elect a point person, to focus on both internal and external communication. The communication subcommittee/point person could inform food shelf recipients of any changes, oversee the monthly posting on iPutney, streamline the internal volunteer email communication process and organize meetings. I encourage the PFS to continue using the newly created communication tools including the creation of an email list for communicating with volunteers between meetings and the cloud service, Dropbox, an on-line document-sharing program.

By addressing these communication issues, the PFS’s intention is to increase and strengthen communication with the PFS recipients, the Putney community, and within the PFS organization.

Human Capital

The second area identified as needing improvement is human capital, otherwise known as people. The PFS has always operated solely on volunteer support. No plans exist to change this structure. However, without a sufficient supply of human capital, burnout is often a consequence and can hinder the sustainability of an organization.

PROBLEM 4: The PFS has inadequate human capital.

Matthew and Gino operated the PFS alone for more than two years. Gino would staff Tuesday nights and Matthew would staff Saturday mornings, thus staffing issues would arise if either were unable to work the scheduled shift. Matthew would do all the food purchasing from the VFB and Gino would do any additional miscellaneous shopping as necessary. Formal solicitation for donations was extremely limited. Laurel Ellis, the treasurer of the PCC, handled
all the receiving of mail, the finances including bookkeeping and banking, and the acknowledgment of donors by sending thank you notes.

The forum generated a lot of interest for volunteering. Within two weeks of the forum, more than ten people showed up at the PFS to train as substitute staff. An immediate need arose to create a volunteer application. The purpose of the application was to offer potential volunteers suggestions and ideas on how to help support the PFS. The application acts as a tool to track volunteers’ interests, to match volunteers up with opportunities, and to give ideas and suggestions on how to help support the PFS (Appendix 2). The PFS now has a volunteer coordinator who is in the preliminary stages of writing a training manual for volunteers. The main purpose of the training manual would be for all volunteers to relay a consistent message to the recipients while being aware of the procedures and policies of the organization. The volunteer coordinator will also be creating a database for easily identifying volunteers for future projects and needs.

Formed in April 2011, volunteers, food shelf recipients, and community members make up the Steering Committee, which meets monthly. The creation of the steering committee has increased the PFS human capital by 400%.

I recommend that as the organization develops, the steering committee meetings should become open to the public for further community involvement; the invitation to join the conversation and planning should include the community, other organizational partners, new volunteers, and food shelf recipients. Having more people involved with the planning allows the group to divide the work, sharing the responsibility of running a volunteer based organization, and removing the burden from one or two individuals. This will be particularly important as the group identifies new roles and responsibilities required to help fulfill the organizations’ needs.
Additionally, I encourage the volunteer coordinator to finalize the training manual and the creation of a volunteer database.

**Organizational Development**

The third area identified as needing improvement is organizational development. Without planning, organizations are not able to foresee the direction the future is heading towards, they can be unprepared for roadblocks caught without a contingency plan, and they are not able to keep on track to reach goals. For the sustainability of an organization, planning is a key piece of the puzzle.

**PROBLEM 5: The PFS has limited formal or informal organizational structure.**

With only two volunteers, the PFS had spent limited time developing as an organization. Beyond the initial informal relationship formed with the PCC to house the PFS and act as the fiscal sponsor (known as an “umbrella” arrangement), the operation of the PFS was on a day-to-day basis. For sustainability of the organization, the PFS desires fiscal autonomy from the PCC. However, the application process for a 501(c)(3) non-profit status takes time, money and stacks of paperwork. The majority of this paperwork revolves around the organization’s development and includes having a Mission Statement, a Vision Statement, Goals, Objectives, By-laws, Roles & Responsibilities, Policies, and Data Collection. I address these issues individually in this section.

**Mission Statement**

At the first annual visioning and planning meeting held in January 2012, the steering committee voted on creating a new expanded mission statement: *The Putney Food Shelf provides supplemental healthy food for area people in need.* Prior to this, the PFS used *Neighbors helping Neighbors* and *Supported by the Community* as a simple message in communications. When
deciding on a mission statement, the group discussed wanting to keep it simple. The steering committee closely examined each word of the mission statement:

Supplemental – It is not the intent of the steering committee that the items provided at the PFS are the only sources of food for households. The food supplied to recipients does not meet the minimum daily nutritional requirements. Food shelf recipients should expect to consume other food during the week, either purchased by the household or received through other food assistance programs.

Healthy – The PFS steering committee has agreed to make a conscious effort to provide the healthiest food choices possible based on the selection available from food providers (VFB and other miscellaneous shopping). The PFS does not turn away snack food items such as soda, candy and chips directly received from individual donations. However, when PFS controls the purchasing of food directly, the items ordered and purchased will be the most nutritious possible. PFS recipients individually select available food items off the shelves of the PFS, allowing client choice.

Area people – The PFS is aware that people from Putney and the surrounding towns visit the PFS and likewise that some people from Putney visit other agencies outside of Putney. To be as inclusive as possible, and without having to collect additional personal data, the steering committee decided to use the word area rather than naming a specific area of coverage.

In need – PFS does not collect income information from the recipients and the steering committee has agreed not to collect income information in the near future. The steering committee agrees that if someone comes to the food shelf looking for food, then he or she must need food. If a funder, such as a grantor or the town of Putney, requests the food shelf collect additional data, this subject will be reevaluated at that time. On occasion, recipients will take
more food than the volunteer staff believes they need. If the recipient repeats this behavior week after week, the volunteer will speak to the recipient and if necessary ask to put some food items back on the shelves. When it comes to how much food each household may take each week, volunteer staff say to recipients, “Please take what you can use for the week”.

**Vision Statement, Goals, Objectives**

The PFS steering committee has temporarily opted out of developing a vision statement, goals, and objectives. These issues, continuously addressed at monthly meetings, are on the agenda for finalization and approval by the steering committee at the second annual visioning and planning meeting scheduled for January 2013. The PFS will use *Neighbors helping Neighbors* and *Supported by the Community* as temporary vision slogans.

When setting goals and objectives they should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely (SMART). One technique is to look at the problems identified and create goals to resolve the problem; then develop the objectives to help the PFS obtain their goals. As an example, taking the first problem identified, I created two goals and multiple objectives as stated below:

**PROBLEM 1:** *The PFS does not notify the food shelf recipients of changes in the regularly posted open hours.*

**GOAL 1:** To be staffed and open 100% of the regularly scheduled operating hours.

**GOAL 2:** To notify, minimally two weeks in advance, the recipients of any dates the PFS will not be open during regularly scheduled operating hours.

**OBJECTIVES:** To identify the unscheduled food shelf operating hours. To keep a calendar accessible to all volunteers. To train volunteers to operate the food shelf. To
create a substitution call list for emergencies. To have two people scheduled to operate
the food shelf each shift.

By-laws, Roles & Responsibilities, Policies

The steering committee is currently discussing the need to create by-laws, define roles
and responsibilities, and document policy decisions. At this time, they have limited decisions
finalized. The steering committee however has documented and agreed upon an explicit set of
group norms to promote a cohesive group atmosphere and create an instrument for conducting
communication and coping with conflict where all members feel respected and appreciated
throughout the entire process (Appendix 3).

Additionally, the creation of a preliminary list of roles and responsibilities is in progress
(Appendix 4). The PFS steering committee is committed to working on this document, which in
addition to being a required document for the non-profit status application; it can also help
identify the organization’s volunteer needs.

The steering committee makes the majority of policy decisions on a case-by-case basis as
they arise. However, issues that have already surfaced that require policies include:

- Holiday Closing Policy – creating a policy for when major holidays fall on Tuesdays or
  Saturdays.
- Off hours & Emergencies – creating a policy for when emergency access to the PFS
during off hours is necessary.
- Delivery – creating a policy to identify how food shelf delivery to homebound and/or
disabled area residents occurs.
- Prepared Foods – creating a policy on prepared foods (who we accept them from and
  how) and how notification to the recipients that this food is taken at their own risk.
Data Collection

At one time, a computer was available for record keeping and data collection. However, this is no longer the case. To rectify this problem the PFS began using an on-line file sharing service, Dropbox. Now steering committee members who have access to a computer are able to retrieve folders that contain the PFS documents online. Steering committee members supply others in the group who are not able to access the Dropbox account with hard copies when appropriate.

Beyond the limited data collected from the recipients of the food shelf, as noted previously, items stored on Dropbox include meeting agendas and minutes, financial records including donations, budgets, and expense reports, forms such as the volunteer application, and VFB Network Partner information.

The PFS, at some point in the future, may need to collect additional data from recipients. However, before randomly collecting data, the PFS should develop monitoring indicators, to decide in advance what specific information to gather. Indicators are tools used to monitor and analyze the organizations ability to meet goals and objectives. Statistic to collect include food shelf recipients data, volunteers and steering committee members data, the financial records including donations, budgets, and expense reports, and outside data compiled by other organizations. Identifying a baseline, using the indicator(s), is necessary to discover the starting point in which to compare and analyze all future data. Here are sample indicators using the goals and objectives from Problem 1:

**PROBLEM 1:** *The PFS does not notify the food shelf recipients of changes in the regularly posted open hours.*

**GOAL 1:** To be staffed and open 100% of the regularly scheduled operating hours.
GOAL 2: To notify, minimally two weeks in advance, the recipients of any dates the PFS will not be open during regularly scheduled operating hours.

OBJECTIVES: To identify the unscheduled food shelf operating hours. To keep a calendar accessible to all volunteers. To train volunteers to operate the food shelf. To create a substitution call list for emergencies. To have two people scheduled to operate the food shelf each shift.

MONITORING INDICATOR GOAL 1: Compute the percentage of days open and staffed in 2012:

\[
\frac{\text{Number of days staffed and open in 2012}}{\text{Total Number of Tuesdays & Saturdays in 2012}}
\]

MONITORING INDICATOR GOAL 2: Compute the percentage of holidays closed with minimally two weeks notification to PFS recipients:

\[
\frac{\text{Number of holidays closed with minimally two weeks notification to PFS recipients}}{\text{Number of holidays that fall on Tuesdays & Saturdays in 2012}}
\]

My primary recommendation for continuously improving organizational development within the PFS is to maintain the regular steering committee meetings and annual visioning and planning meetings to address frequently these issues as stated in this section. Once addressed, the steering committee should annually review the goals and objectives to make sure they still align with the organization’s needs and mission statement. When writing the vision statement, it is suggested that the PFS include not just the purpose of the organization but also include and the values and beliefs about how things should be done. Additionally remember to keep goals and objects SMART and to plan indicators before gathering statistical data and information.
Financial Sustainability

The forth area identified as needing improvement is financial sustainability. Financial security is high on the list of important factors for an organization to remain sustainable. In times of economic downturns, such as the current economic conditions, social service agencies, who heavily rely on donors, often find themselves struggling to secure funding.

**PROBLEM 6:** The PFS has limited funds to support the organization and meet needs of the PFS recipients.

In 2010, the PFS operated in a deficit; the expenses exceeded the income by just over 6.5%. Although the steering committee did not directly solicit donation in 2010, community members and local businesses donated roughly $2500 to support the PFS, 47% of which came from one local business. Without financial stability, the PFS shelves would be bare.

In order to be a sustainable organization, the PFS decided to begin closely managing the financial situation. The areas immediately focused on were budgeting and creating a development plan that would outline the cycle of giving and identify the strategies designed to secure resources needed to meet the budget needs. I explore these two areas in greater detail in this section below.

**Budget**

Prior to 2012, there is no history of a budget or financial plan for the PFS. Periodically when asked, Laurel Ellis would supply Matthew and Gino with the available account balance (L. Ellis, personal correspondence, January 6, 2011).

Since the PFS moved to the PCC in 2009, the PCC board treasurer, Laurel, has looked after its banking and financial records. Laurel, in a shared mailbox at the Putney Post Office, receives the PFS’s mail and then sorts and processes it as needed. Donations are deposited and
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donors are sent a thank you card, invoices are paid, and all of the information is recorded in an
Excel spreadsheet. She provides copies of the financial records to the PFS upon request.

After full review of the PFS’s historical financial statements, I summarized and reported
the information to the steering committee at the first annual planning and visioning meeting. The
steering committee discussed how to disburse the funds in 2012 and then drafted a budget based
on the discussion items. The steering committee reviewed the budget, made a few changes, and
voted unanimously to approve the drafted budget, as seen in Figure 11, in March 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2012 Putney Food Shelf Budget</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenue:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Funds (Nov.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reoccurring Expenses:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VT Food Bank Membership Dues</td>
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<tr>
<td>VT Food Bank Food Purchases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Misc. Food Purchases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving Baskets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCS School Pizza Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Envelopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank You Note Cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zip Lock Baggies &amp; Plastic Wrap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>One Time Expenses:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Center - One Time Contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501(c)3 Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit Financial Software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11. The 2012 Putney Food Shelf Budget

The budgeted revenue includes expected donations based on historical trends and
anticipated funds from the Town of Putney. Allocated annually, the funds from the Town of
Putney, a small percentage of the town budget, are taxpayer dollars committed to supporting social service agencies. At the PFS forum, a community member inquired why the PFS was not on the list of social service agencies to receive money from the town. A PFS steering committee member investigated how to get the PFS on the town list and discovered one hundred signatures from registered town voters needed to be collected. She then started a petition and collected more than one hundred signatures in less than a week. The PFS received town funds for the first time in 2011 and will remain on the list to receive funds annually indefinitely.

The expenses include the purchase of food inventory, new programs and initiatives, and rainy day funds. Based on the total pounds purchased and received by the PFS in the previous year the food shelf pays an annual membership fee to the VFB. The membership fee of $575 covers the purchasing of between 10,000 and 29,999 pounds in 2012. The PFS benefits from being a network partner of the VFB. The PFS can place weekly orders, or as often as needed, for items purchased through the VFB online ordering system. Wide varieties of items are available including canned goods, fresh produce, meat, and dairy. During the winter months when fresh fruits and vegetables can be scarce in Vermont, the PFS purchases miscellaneous food from outside retailers. Typically, a volunteer purchases these items at discount food outlets including Dottie’s in Brattleboro, VT, The Barn in Greenfield, MA, and Stan’s in Walpole, NH.

For Thanksgiving 2011, the Putney Central School students assembled and donated approximately half of the thirty-five baskets that the PFS distributed to food shelf recipients, with the other half paid for by the PFS. The holiday baskets included the majority of items a family of four to six people would need for a traditional Thanksgiving meal. Additionally, each family received a turkey, purchased at a reduced price through the VFB and/or donated by community members. With the success of the 2011 Thanksgiving baskets and the growing
number of food shelf recipients, the 2012 budget is for 40-45 baskets, or $400, to be sure that every household that signs up to receive a holiday basket receives one.

To begin the process of securing non-profit 501(c)(3) status the PFS has budgeted funds for 2012. Because the PFS is still in the exploratory stage, the budgeted figure may or may not be sufficient to cover the full process. Further investigation and pursuit of a pro bono lawyer or significantly discounted legal advice is ongoing. Since one of the components of acquiring non-profit status is financial reporting, the PFS is looking into acquiring nonprofit financial software to gain another level of autonomy from the PCC.

Having housed the PFS for two years, the steering committee voted to give a onetime gift of $1220 to the PCC in appreciation of their support. The steering committee is aware that the PCC is struggling financially to maintain the historical building, especially with rising oil prices. The decision to give a onetime gift rather than pay rent was because the PFS does not want to have a financial obligation it might not be able to fulfill in the future that would jeopardize the organization’s ability to exist. The steering committee sent a thank you letter to the PCC expressing the organization’s gratitude and appreciation (Appendix 5).

Each year the Putney Central School, grades one through six, hold a six-week can drive. The steering committee rewards the classroom donating the most during the six-weeks with a pizza party. To incentivize the students, the PFS donates pizzas to the winning classroom. In 2011, the Putney Central School donated more than seventy crates of food to the PFS.

The budget also includes funds for postage, envelopes, thank you note cards, baggies and plastic wrap. The steering committee expects to mail about 30-40 thank you notes based on the current projected donations. Designed by a steering committee member, it costs roughly one
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dollar to produce each card (Appendix 6). The baggies and plastic wrap are for portioning out bulk food items such 20+ pound blocks of cheese and 40+ pound bags of veggies.

The PFS has set aside $500 for capital improvements. These funds are for a refrigerator or freezer replacement. However, before purchasing a replacement, the PFS is dedicated to seeking a donor or securing a grant to cover these costs. However, should an emergency occur prior to this, the funds will be available for immediate action.

In addition to the budget items above, the PFS is aware that placing a value on in-kind donations is important to calculate accurately the true expense of running an organization. Figure 12 further identifies in-kind donations that the PFS are now tracking for inclusion in future budgets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Begin Tracking In Kind:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Member Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Center Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Donations (in pounds unless noted otherwise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landmark College Fundraiser (food purchase dollars)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landmark College Prepared Foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Putney Central School Food Drives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putney Food Co-op Prepared Foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putney Food Co-op Drop Box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gleaners &amp; Community Gardeners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Find Grant $, post on iPutney, seek donations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale to Weigh Food Donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrigerator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese Knife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting Board</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12. The Putney Food Shelf Additional List of In-kind Contributions to Track
The budget does not currently reflect the results of the PFS holding its first annual appeal campaign. If the steering committee launches the campaign, both the income generated from the campaign and the expense involved in executing it will need to be budgeted.

**Development Plan**

As a financial planning tool, the steering committee created their first Annual Development Plan (2012). The Development Plan outlines the current strategy to raise funds to support the organization and proposes ideas and suggestions for the future fund raising goals. Currently the PFS receives funds from unsolicited donations and the Town of Putney. Future ideas include the first Annual Appeal Campaign, grant writing, fund raising events, and regularly soliciting donations.

The full development plan is included as Appendix 7. The PFS’s 2012 goal for fundraising is $8600 and includes expected donations based on historical trends and anticipated funds from the Town of Putney. The development plan is a framework used by the steering committee that outlines the steps needed to take within the year to meet the financial goals of the organization. It covers all the stages, from planning to implementation to evaluation, for the two current funding streams (Town of Putney Funds and Solicited Donations) and three potential future funding streams (Grants, Special Fundraising Events, and an Annual Appeal).

A development plan is an especially useful tool when taking on a new task, such as the first Annual Appeal Campaign, as it can allow an organization to think through all the steps it takes to achieve the anticipated result. The “who, what, why, where, when, and how” need to be considered before undertaking a new initiative. A Gantt Chart can be used to examine the flow of a project, to identify a timeframe for individual tasks, and to assign tasks. The PFS 2012
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Development Plan includes a sample Gantt Chart outlining the strategy for implementing this sort of project.

The PFS is well on its way to becoming financially sustainable having increased its budgeting capabilities by more than 200% from 2010 to 2012. I recommend the finance subcommittee meet quarterly to maintain the organization’s financial records, to institute new fundraising strategies, and to establish financial goals for upcoming years.

Partnerships

The fifth area identified as needing improvement is partnerships. Partnerships and collaborations allow more people to come together to realize shared goals. With limited resources, both internal and external, organizations that are able to work together often obtain improved results for all parties involved.

**PROBLEM 7: The PFS lacks community relationships to support the growing demand on the organization.**

Although the PFS had a few relationships in the past, it was essentially operating in a silo, and lacked mutual partnerships where all parties benefit. The relationships were occurring automatically with limited connection between organizations. The use of the Putney Family Services’ phone number is one example of an organization giving something to the PFS with limited return. Now the PFS is collaborating with Putney Family Services and other local social service agencies, including Putney Cares and Aging in Putney, meeting quarterly for the Putney Interagency Group (PIG) meetings. To date, the group has created a master list of local social service agencies (Appendix 8), discussed potential future collaborative fundraising, achieved a better understanding of what each agency provides to the community, and begun looking at how they can work together to support each other and those in the community.
Other community partners previously mentioned include Transition Putney, the Town of Putney, the PCC, the organizations that participated in the forum, and the local schools. The local schools have become increasingly active partners. The students have organized food drives, played a part in gleaning (harvesting produce after it has been determined not economically profitable to harvest), stocked shelves, and raked the PCC grounds. The Putney Grammar School students, grades one through eight, hold monthly food drives with each grade assigned a specific month. A Landmark College student convinced their food service provider to offer the students the option of donating their unused meal plan money to the PFS. The food service provider is now working with the PFS to purchase items and work out a schedule for ordering to work with the PFS’s limited storage space. In exchange, the PFS is able to offer local students an outlet to complete required community service hours and the experience of helping community members.

Other partners include the Putney Food Cooperative, which allows the PFS to have a donation box at their store and supplies the PFS with hot food items from the deli on Tuesday nights and milk and other dairy items that are close to the sell by date. Peoples Bank also has a donation box and typically collects a few hundred dollars in donations during the winter holidays. Local gardeners have grown extra rows, donated surplus produce and allowed the PFS to utilize a compost pile.

The growing number of partnerships is helping the PFS meet the needs of the recipients. The PFS views the partnership with the VFB is one of its most important. Without the VFB membership, the PFS would struggle to afford to put and keep food on the shelves.
Vermont Foodbank

With thousands of our neighbors struggling to meet their food needs, the VFB works at the local, state, and national level ensuring all Vermonters have enough food during this rising trend of food insecurity and hunger. Through a network of 280 food shelves, meals sites, senior centers, shelters, and after-school programs, the VFB runs programs that help feed as many as 86,000 Vermonters in need of emergency food assistance annually (VFB, 2/23/12).

The benefits of being a network partner include access to trainings, such as Food Safety and Volunteer Management, opportunities to connect with other network partners at Regional Network Meetings, and continued education through conference participation. However, the most important benefit is access to increased purchasing power, federal food programs, and free and gleaned food items. Figure 13 represents how food flows through the charitable food system. Without collaborating with the VFB, the PFS would not have access to the National Food sources including USDA Commodities that tend to be free, or significantly reduce priced, to local emergency food shelves.
As a network partner, the PFS has access to the VFB’s online purchasing system that includes local and national food sources. After a trained PFS volunteer places the order and schedules a pick up time (as often as weekly), either the same volunteer or other volunteers retrieve the order at the warehouse in Brattleboro, VT. The warehouse is around 20 miles roundtrip and requires volunteers to use their personal vehicles. The alternative to picking up directly at the VFB warehouse is to place an order monthly and to pay approximately $30 for
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delivery. In addition to saving the delivery fee, another benefit of picking up directly is access to “free” items set aside at the VFB that can be handpicked and added to the order. The free items typically include gleaned produce, dairy, cheese, beverages, and other miscellaneous items. Although there is no charge for these “free” items, their weight, in pounds, counts towards the annual membership fee.

I recommend the PFS continue to work on building a network of partners. This could include local businesses, health clinics, social service agencies providing services not offered by the PFS, and other food shelves. Partnerships and network connections not only benefit the PFS and the steering committee, but also the food shelf recipients. I also suggest that in the future, a representative, or representatives, from the PFS attend the Regional Network Partners meeting held annually at the VFB. This will enable the steering committee to make contacts and exchange ideas with other representatives from similar organizations.

IV. Limitations

I encountered a number of factors that limited my ability to conclude that the project planning and design as outlined in this paper would work as a plan for other similar volunteer based organizations. As this was a case study looking at the sustainability of one organization, the PFS, the findings identified cannot be used as a means to understand the needs of other emergency food shelves. If time had not been an issue, visiting with other similar sized food shelves may have offered other ideas and suggestions not outlined within this paper.

By not attending the initial forum, I was unable to hear directly the firsthand account of the identified needs of the PFS as stated in this paper. I received the majority of the needs analysis from secondhand information; including participant surveys and the summary written up
THE PUTNEY FOOD SHELF

after the event and posted on iPutney. Had I started my practicum just a few days earlier, I
would have been able to attend the forum. However, Paul LeVasseur wrote the summary report
posted on iPutney within a week of the forum and functioned as historical account of the event.

A major hurdle I had to overcome with this research project was that I generally had to
work alone. As a volunteer based organization, most of the volunteers work full-time jobs and
have limited availability to dedicate the time needed to take on such a large project. It took more
than eight months of being involved before the PFS formed a steering committee. During this
time, I found myself creating documents based on needs identified and then bring them to
meetings for review and final approval. Now that the steering committee has been active for
almost a year, the initial challenges faced of working alone have lessened. The steering
committee has formed sub committees, which report to the steering committee monthly, to work
on specific needs of the organization. All committee members are committed to taking active
roles to help the PFS become a sustainable volunteer based organization.

Lastly, are limited time and an endless amount of issues and angles to pursue, including
the rising cost of food prices, limits storage capacity at the PFS and the recipient perspective.
The more I researched, the more questions I had; eventually I needed to stop, which has been
difficult because of my continued active involvement in the steering committee.

V. Conclusions

The PFS had been operating for years without formalized communication, organizational
planning, or solicited donations. Regardless of these problems, as identified within this paper,
the organization continued to operate and provide food to the food insecure in the Putney
community.
In addition to the many changes have occurred since the inception of this research project as documented in this paper, Matthew eventually suspended his participation and stepped out of his role at the PFS because of family commitments and work scheduling (M. Wright, personal communication, 5/23/11). Although Matthew’s leaving was a big loss for the organization, it occurred at a time when more volunteers were becoming actively involved and the steering committee was in the formation stage.

Steering committee members have now taken on roles based on their individual interests and qualifications. The current steering committee members are committed to accomplishing the tasks necessary to develop a sustainable volunteer based community organization as outlined in this paper. The problem of food insecurity and hunger is not going to go away overnight, nor anytime in the foreseeable future, and thus the need for an exit strategy does not exist. Rather, the PFS has opted to create a sustainability strategy to ensure the organization is around as long as there is a need.

In addition to the recommendations and the information provided in this paper, I also recommend the PFS steering committee:

- Continue listening to the food shelf recipients to learn what they need
- Participate in course offerings and training seminars provided by the VFB
- Continue to suggest creative ways for community members to support the organization – Example: Organize and maintain an “open” community garden on site that anyone can harvest produce at any time
- Plan for future stages of growth – Example: what would the organization need if the number of recipients doubled, tripled, quadrupled, or beyond
- Hold a follow-up forum
THE PUTNEY FOOD SHELF

As the steering committee continues to organize and develop, they may find themselves with more time available to take on bigger issues, such as conducting recipient surveys and looking at the bigger problem of food insecurity and hunger in the community. Meetings, conversations, and research constantly generate new ideas. The purpose however is to not just design a plan based on these ideas, but to act upon the plan in pursuit of reaching goals and meeting the needs of all parties involved. I believe the mission, *The Putney Food Shelf provides supplemental healthy food for area people in need*, is already being achieved and the PFS is on its way to developing into a sustainable volunteer based organization.
VI. Bibliography


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VII. Appendices

The following appendices are collectively important for both an understanding of the project development and as a historical record for the PFS steering committee. They include the documents and procedures established during the development of the organization from September 2010 to March 2012.

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Appendix 1. Putney Food Shelf Promotional Flyer

Putney Food Shelf

Tuesdays 6–7PM,
Saturdays 9–10AM

Putney Community Center
10 Christian Square • 802.387.2120
[side ramp entrance]

The Putney Foodshelf provides supplemental healthy food for area people in need.
The Putney Foodshelf is supported simply by volunteers and donations. Both are always welcome.
Appendix 2. Volunteer Application

Putney Foodshelf

Tuesdays 6-7pm • Saturdays 9-10am
Putney Community Center
10 Christian Square [side ramp entrance] • 802.387.2120

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

EMAIL

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

☐ ON-CALL STAFF
   Be trained to operate the Putney Foodshelf as a substitute, on-call staff. Responsibilities include: opening and closing the Foodshelf, greeting and assisting clients, and tracking data.
   Commitment: 1–1 ½ hours, as needed, during hours of operation.

☐ PUBLICITY
   Write a press release, news paper article, or help create a newsletter. Identify new ways to recruit volunteers while helping the Foodshelf spread the word about who we are, what we do, and how to help.
   Commitment: 1–2 hours a month.

☐ GRANT WRITING
   Assist in identifying grant opportunities. Collect data and draft grant proposals.
   Commitment: 1–20 hours, depending on level of involvement.

☐ PICK UP/DELIVER FOOD (PUTNEY CO-OP)
   Pick up hot food bar items, dairy, and other items from the Putney Food Co-op and deliver to the Putney Foodshelf. Items need to be delivered to the Foodshelf by 6pm on Tuesday evenings.
   Commitment: 30 minutes, Tuesday evenings.

☐ PICK UP/DELIVER FOOD (FOOD BANK)
   Be trained to pick up and deliver the monthly food supply from the Vermont Foodbank. A car is required to transport food items from Brattleboro to Putney. Must be able to lift 20 pounds.
   Commitment: 1–1 ½ hours, as needed, monthly.

☐ STOCK SHELVES/UNLOAD FOOD
   Assist with the unloading of food from the delivery and/or stock and organize shelves in the Foodshelf.
   Commitment: 20 minutes–1 hour, as needed, monthly.

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☐ CLEAN

Gleaning is the act of harvesting excess or unmarketable produce from a farm. The gleaning program at the Vermont Foodbank uses volunteers to glean produce at Vermont farms; the food is then distributed through the Foodbank’s network partners to Vermonters-in-need.

The Putney Foodshelf earns $2.00 per volunteer hour towards the cost of our Vermont Foodbank membership when you specify, each time you volunteer, ”The Putney Foodshelf” as the recipient of your volunteer hours.

Commitment Length: Gleaning opportunities are sporadic throughout the harvest season. The average glean is approximately 1–2 hours. To receive notification of gleaning opportunities or for more information, please contact Theresa Snow at the Vermont Foodbank at 802-477-4114 or tsnow@vtfoodbank.org.

To be added to the gleaning email notification automatically please check here ☐

☐ ORGANIZE AND/OR PARTICIPATE IN A FUND RAISING EVENT

Examples: Community Concerts, Walk for Hunger, Silent Auction

Commitment: 1–20 hours, depending on level of involvement.

☐ ORGANIZE AND/OR PARTICIPATE IN A FOOD DRIVE

Examples: Churches, Businesses, Groups/Clubs, Schools, Neighborhoods

Neighborhood Paper Bag Drive: Distribute brown paper bags to all your neighbors with a note that says “Please fill up this bag with non-perishable donations (food & household items) and leave it on your doorstep for pick-up on (date) or drop the bag off at the (identify a location such as the Co-op/bank/library/etc.). All donations go directly to the Putney Foodshelf.”

Commitment: 1–10 hours, depending on level of involvement.

OTHER IDEAS

Prepare food tasting samples out of similar ingredients offered by the Foodshelf and supply instruction cards for duplication of the recipe to be offered during operating hours.

Pick up perishable items from the Foodshelf to prepare a donated item made from the ingredients to prevent spoilage/waste.

Organize a Canning Party/Freezing Party and donate items to the Foodshelf.

Grow an extra row and donate the surplus from your garden.

Deliver groceries to home-bound clients.

Be creative — the ideas are endless.

DONATIONS ALWAYS ACCEPTED

Cash/Checks* — Please make checks payable to the ”Putney Foodshelf”.

Food/Personal Supplies/Household Items — Items can be dropped off at the Community Center during hours of operation or at the Putney Food Co-op (box in front entryway).

* While donations of food are helpful, we procure more food with donations of money that allow us to buy food in bulk, by the pound, at the Vermont Foodbank.

Mail this form or donations to the Putney Foodshelf, PO Box 337, Putney, Vermont 05346

Putney Foodshelf

The Putney Food Pantry is supported simply by volunteers and donations. Both are always welcome.
Appendix 3. The Putney Food Shelf Group Norms

The Putney Food Shelf
Working Group Norms

**Definition of “Norms”:**
A set of assumptions or expectations held by members of a group or organization concerning what kind of behavior is right or wrong, good or bad, allowed or not allowed.

Norms are a result of what a group is and does. They are:
- Explicit (fully and clearly defined) or Implicit (implied, rather than expressly stated)
- Developed in response or foresight to past experience, a critical incident, or a discussion
- A Living Document (updated and modified, often by explicitly defining)

**The Stages of Group Development: A Model by Bruce Tuckman**
These phases are believed to be necessary and inevitable in order for a group to grow, to face up to challenges, to tackle problems, to find solutions, to plan work, and to deliver results. There is no set order and fluctuation between phases often occurs.

- **Forming:** the group comes together, initially gets to know one another, and forms as a group.
- **Storming:** Tensions occur, conflict arises, “growing pains” may occur as the group learns to work with one another.
- **Norming:** Coming to agreements, mediating differences, mutual agreement is reached on how the group operates.
- **Performing:** The group practices its craft and becomes effective in meeting objectives
- **Adjourning:** The process of “unforming” the group, letting go of the group structure and moving on.

**Norms: Accepted as Standards in Academic and Professional Circles**
- Open Mindedness: listen and respect all points of view.
- Acceptance: the effort to suspend judgment as best we can.
- Curiosity: seeking to understand, rather than persuade.
- Discovery: questioning assumptions on our own part and looking for new insights within ourselves.
- Sincerity: speaking of what has personal heart and meaning.
- Brevity: go for honesty and depth, but abstain from going on and on.
- Servant Leadership: let go of the need to do things “my way”, let others “shine” in the group.

**Norms: Samples & Suggestions**
- Understand and hold dear the responsibility to the community and bioregion:
  This is the guiding point in all decisions and visions. We do this work for the greater good, the group and ourselves.
- Come into and leave a group with joy:
We do not want people to take on something they have no time or desire to do. We want our group to be healthy and balanced down to the last person. People should feel free to say no, leave, or change their role within the group at any time. We should have and know the process for resolving issues. We should make every effort to leave a group with the same amount of joy when we entered.

- **Plan for retirement:**
  No one needs to make a lifetime commitment. We must enable diversity and foster new leadership, to avoid crises that occur if there is no succession plan. We mentor each other and create mechanisms for working through this process.

- **Actively recruit new group members:**
  New group members should strengthen the current group by bringing experience, diversity, a positive attitude and a willingness to help support the organization’s mission. New group members should be added by group consensus.

- **Draw your inspiration from the community:**
  Groups are not autonomous, we listen and respond. It is about supporting the community’s vision, not telling them what that vision should be. We offer opportunities for new information acquisition, but we do not aim to persuade.

- **Maintain an open door policy:**
  Actively communicate with the community, from needs and wants, to plans and dreams. We use every means available to communicate with our community so they know what is happening within the organization.

- **Speak openly and compassionately with each other:**
  Speak honestly and strive for open dialogue.

- **Will seek mediation if conflicts arise:**
  If disagreements or conflict arise first seek to maintain the relationship, and then seek an unbiased mediator if the conflict persists. We will seek training and mentoring in non-violent communication and mediation techniques if necessary.

- **Remember that we are committed to positive action in the present:**
  If stagnation occurs, try to remedy it by splitting up the task into smaller steps.

- **Give each other the benefit of the doubt:**
  Accept that as a group you may have to work with people you disagree with, dislike, or have had issues within the past. Be able to put that aside.

- **Minimize Miscommunication:**
  Please ask if you have questions or need more information. Participate in the monthly meetings or read the meeting minutes and send questions, comments, or concerns to the group via email for clarity or future conversation.

- **Explore and collaborate with other working groups and community organizations:**
  Where do you overlap? Where can you work together? How can you learn from them? What can you offer them?

- **No project is ever fully realized:**
  If we ever feel a project is done, we should step back and reassess. There is always room for improvement and there is always more to learn. Monitoring and evaluating should be ongoing parts of every project. All projects do not stand-alone, they are interdependent. Look to see where your group could support other groups that may not be as far along as your own.
Appendix 4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Putney Food Shelf  
Roles and Responsibilities  
(Working Document Started 11-29-11)

Facilitator
- Presides over and conducts meeting according to accepted parliamentary law
- Keeps members and discussion on track
- Coordinates activities by keeping in close touch with Committee members
- Encourages participation of all members in an enthusiastic manner

Co-Facilitator
- Presides at meetings in the absence of the facilitator
- Oversees all committee work and management of assignments
- Encourages participation of all members in an enthusiastic manner

Secretary
- Prepares and distributes the minutes of meetings
- Records group decisions
- Provides a written agenda for each meeting
- Attends to official correspondences
- Sends out meeting notices & weekly communication messages

Treasurer
- Works with the bookkeeper to ensure accurate record keeping and exchange of information
- Keeps financial records in Excel pertaining to food expenses
- Oversees appropriate fund-raising activities

Historian
- Maintains an accurate and up-to-date history to include a state newsletter and an annual report of chapter activities

Steering Committee Members
- Comprised of all parties who attend regular monthly meetings
- Plan meetings and prepare agenda items for upcoming meetings

Sub Committee Members
- Report monthly to the steering committee

Examples:
Fundraising Committee
- Oversees the actions outlined in the Development Plan

Partnership Committee
- Foster existing partnerships and build new relationships with local businesses and organizations
- Places donation boxes around town, Coordinated collection of donation boxes
- Solicit business donations and in-kind gifts
- Look into shared kitchen opportunities (community food storage preparation)
THE PUTNEY FOOD SHELF

Staff and Substitute Staff
- Staff Food Shelf Open Hours
- Collect data from Food Shelf participants

Volunteer Coordinator
- Create and update training materials
- Coordinate training for new volunteers
- Track staffing schedule and seek substitute staff as needed
- Recruit new volunteers as needed
- Answer volunteer questions and respond to concerns

Volunteers & Unassigned Tasks
- Order Food from VT Foodbank
- Pick-up food from VT Foodbank
- Do additional shopping as needed to maintain adequate supplies while being aware of any potential budgetary constraints
- Sorting and Stocking Shelves
- Writing thank you notes & letters
- Fundraising & Grant Writing
- Pick up food around town: (Putney Food Co-op, Peoples Bank) – find other locations to place boxes (examples: Post office, River Valley Credit Union, restaurants, General Store)
- Providing outreach and information
- Writing & posting information to post on iPutney
Appendix 5. Letter to PCC Accompanying Onetime Gift

Laurel Ellis  
Putney Community Center  
PO Box 337  
Putney, VT 05346

January 16, 2012

Dear Laurel,

At today’s Annual Meeting of the Putney Food Shelf Steering Committee, the members voted to make an unrestricted donation to the Putney Community Center in the amount of $1,220.

Putting on your “Putney Food Shelf Fiscal Agent” hat, would you please write a check on our account to the Putney Community Center in that amount?

Thank you!

More than that, though, we wish to thank you personally for your years of help with our account. You have been generous with your time and your talents, and we are most appreciative. With its generous donation of space and utilities, the Putney Community Center has helped us grow our services to the point where we are serving some 25-area families, many with children, meet their needs for supplementary food each week. We couldn’t have done it without your help. Please share this letter and our thanks with the Community Center Board at their next meeting.

With deep appreciation and best wishes for the New Year, and on behalf of the Putney Food Shelf Steering Committee,

Elizabeth W. Christie, Volunteer

cc: Gino Palmeri, Sue Kochinskas, Annik Paul
Appendix 6. PFS Thank You Card

Thank you!

Putney Foodshelf
Tuesdays 6–7PM • Saturdays 9–10AM
Putney Community Center
10 Christian Square [side ramp entrance]

Neighbors helping neighbors.
The Putney Food Pantry is supported simply by volunteers and donations. Both are always welcome.
Appendix 7. The Putney Food Shelf 2012 Development Plan

The Putney Food Shelf
Development Plan/Timeline
(January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012)

Goal: $8,600

- Town of Putney Funds $4,200
- Solicited Donations (Individuals and Businesses) $4,400
- Grants: $0
- Special Events, Fundraising Collaboration $0
- Annual Appeal $0

----------
TOTAL Income $8,600

The information in this development plan covers both the current activities and suggests possible future activities discussed during the 2011 steering committee meetings. Funding to operate the PFS currently comes in the form of donations from individuals and businesses and the annual funding from the Town of Putney.

In addition to implementing an annual appeal and researching/writing grants, future fundraising ideas include an annual silent action, an annual raffle, and a collaborative grant opportunity or fundraising event with Putney Service Agency Partners (Putney Family Services, Putney Cares, Putney Community Center, etc.).

Building a donor registry should be one of the first projects undertaken by the Fundraising Committee. A donor registry will assist the PFS in tracking of donor files, which can be used for future solicitations.

TOWN OF PUTNEY FUNDS

2012 Goal: $4,200

The Annual Town Meeting is held the first Tuesday in March. Pending approval of the town budget, the town funds for supporting social service agencies is disbursed in November.

Prior to March, PFS should double check with the Town Offices to see if any paperwork or supporting documents are needed for Town Meeting Day. The PFS needs to supply a small blurb (and a picture if possible) to include in the Annual Town Report in early February.

PFS sets up a table at Town Meeting Day. Materials to have on table: Volunteer applications, VT benefit applications (SNAP), Statistics posters, Donation Jar.
If approved, PFS will post a thank you note to the town on iPutney in March (see iPutney posting schedule below).

SOLICIT DONATIONS, PUBLIC THANK YOU NOTES, EDUCATION & OUTREACH

2012 Goal: $4,400

Historically, PFS has sporadically posted information and donation requests on iPutney with some success. By creating a schedule of monthly postings, this will offer both the opportunity to solicit donations and educate the public of the activities and needs of the PFS.

Some details in the pre-written blurbs below will need to be modified to the current conditions. A standardized closing for each posting should be created that includes basic general information (hours open, how to help, contact info, mission statement, etc.) There is a log of historical postings to iPutney in the PFS Dropbox folder on-line for ideas.

Sample Monthly Schedule for iPutney Blurbs

January 2012

Bare Shelves at the Putney Food Shelf!

The Putney Food shelf, located at the Community Center, is finding the cupboard getting bare....not good especially with more families showing up needing a helpful hand with food. We are neighbors helping neighbors!

Please add a few non-perishables such as tuna fish, pastas, cereal, canned veggies (NOT beans or yams!), soups, peanut butter, or rice to your shopping list. These items can be dropped off at the Community Center [side ramp entrance] Tuesdays 6-7pm or Saturdays 9-10am, or anytime in the donation box on the side porch at #8 Christian Square, the green house just before the Community Center (#8, side porch, box is marked)

The Putney Food shelf is supported simply by volunteers and donations. Both are always welcome. Monetary donations also welcome. Putney Food shelf, PO Box 337, Putney, Vermont 05346. For more information stop by or call 802-387-2120.

February 2012

A message from the Putney Food shelf!

Do you grow your own vegetables? Do you have any extra seed packs to donate to the Putney Food shelf? There have been some requests.

Drop off whenever the Food shelf is open, or drop off any time at 8 Christian Square (green house next to Community Center), where there is a box on the side porch.

Tuesdays 6–7pm & Saturdays 9–10am
THE PUTNEY FOOD SHELF

Putney Community Center • 10 Christian Square [side ramp entrance] • 802.387.2120

The Putney Food shelf is supported simply by volunteers and donations. Both are always welcome.

March 2012

Putney Food shelf gives thanks!

The Putney Food Shelf would like to graciously thank community members and the Town of Putney for the vote of support at Town Meeting Day. The monies provided through the town budget, will allow the Food Shelf to continue to support Putney residents who are struggling to meet their food needs. We would also like to take this time to recognize The Grammar School and The Putney Central School for their outstanding work on their community food drives. The additions to our shelves are always welcome. Thank you all!

Please feel free to stop in if you are in need of food assistance, to make a donation, to find out about volunteer opportunities, or to just say hello. We are located at the Putney Community Center (10 Christian Square – side entrance) and the hours of operation are 6-7 p.m. on Tuesday evenings and 9-10 a.m. on Saturday mornings. For more information, please call 802-387-2120.

April 2012

Who Supports the Putney Food Shelf?

From the volunteers and recipients of the Putney Food Shelf--our sincerest thanks to all who donated to the USPS mail carriers food drive this year--you gave 500 pounds of canned and boxed food which will go a long way to providing supplemental food for those in our community who are in need!

We also thank our local schools: Michaell DAtilio, a student at Landmark College, who coordinated turning end-of-the-year surplus dining card money into food for the Food Shelf. The Grammar School students have run yearlong monthly can drives in support of the Food Shelf. The Putney Central School Asset Council ran a can drive during February bolstering our supplies. In addition, the Greenwood School has supplied able bodies to help us out while open on Saturdays.

The Putney Food Shelf is a community-based volunteer organization: neighbors helping neighbors.

Please feel free to stop in if you are in need of food assistance, to make a donation, to find out about volunteer opportunities, or to just say hello. We are located at the Putney Community Center (10 Christian Square; side ramp entrance) and the hours of operation are 6-7 p.m. on Tuesday evenings and 9-10 a.m. on Saturday mornings. For more information, please call 802-387-2120.

The Putney Food Shelf provides supplemental healthy food for area people in need

May 2012
Do you have chickens laying more eggs than you need? Donate them to the Food Shelf! Eggs are the perfect food. You can drop off extra eggs before the Food Shelf opens Tuesdays and Saturdays or call Sue (387-5889) to arrange other times.

The Food Shelf continues to help our hungry neighbors Tuesdays 6-7pm and Saturday 9-10am. Numbers have increased to about 10 to 15 families each day we are open.

Think about picking up some extra canned goods next time you shop...beans, tuna fish, canned fruit, or peanut butter. Summer months are more difficult for families with kids on summer vacation.

Do you have time to volunteer? The Vermont Foodbank distribution center in Brattleboro always needs help sorting. If you mention you are volunteering for the Putney Food shelf you earn the Food Shelf $2 an hour credit towards the purchase of food.

If you would like a Volunteer Application that has suggestions on how to support the Putney Food Shelf, please stop by during open hours or contact (ENTER INFORMATION).

Support the Food Shelf with a monetary donation. Checks may be mailed to the Putney Food Shelf at PO Box 337, Putney VT 05346. 
*The Putney Food Shelf provides supplemental healthy food for area people in need.*

**June 2012**

Message to Community & Back Yard Gardeners:
Grow and Extra Row
Where & When to drop off fresh produce donations

**July 2012**

Message about summer food programs around town & the need for donations.

**August 2012**

Over Age 60 Putney Residents: Food for You…

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is a USDA nutrition program that offers free monthly nutrition information and nutritious foods such as:

* Canned Fruits & Veggies
* Fruit Juices
* Cereals
* Cheese

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program is looking for more applicants. If you or someone you know is in need of food assistance, this nutrition program could the answer. Read on for
THE PUTNEY FOOD SHELF

information about the program.

INTERESTED IN FREE, NUTRITIOUS FOOD?

CALL NOW! 1-800-214-4648 - NO WAITING LIST

or CLICK HERE to download an application

http://www.vtfoodbank.org/OurPrograms.../CSFP.aspx

Applications are also available at the Putney Food Shelf.

Note: Each eligible person receives his or her own food box. People can participate in other commodity programs at the same time, but they cannot be enrolled at more than one CSFP site.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?
* 60 years of age or older, living in Vermont and income-eligible.
* Children under 6 years of age and not already in the WIC program.
* Women who are pregnant or post-partum for less than a year and not already in the WIC program.

*Individual and/or household income is used to determine eligibility.
* Each household member may be eligible, and will need to complete an application form.

2010 Income Eligibility Guidelines
Elders: 1 person: $1,174 per month; 2 people: $1,579 per month (for each additional household member add $406)
Women and Children: 1 person: $1,670 per month; 2 people: $2,247 per month (for each additional household member add $577)

September 2012

Message about back to school. # of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. # of families who visit the Putney Food Shelf every week. Solicit donations.

October 2012

Putney Food Shelf Donations Sought
Putneyites: Did you know that the Putney Food Shelf provides food for over 30 food-insecure people every week? (That’s over 7 families) Right now, we need help in providing them with the makings of a Thanksgiving dinner. Donations of food or money are welcome.

Food donations can be dropped off during regular Food Shelf hours, 6-7pm Tuesday and 9-10am Saturday; checks should be sent to Putney Food Shelf, Box 337, Putney, VT 05346. If you cannot drop foodstuffs off during Food Shelf hours, drop food items off at 8 Christian Square (green house just before the Community Center), side porch in the box marked Putney Food
THE PUTNEY FOOD SHELF

Shelf.

The Putney Food Shelf is supported simply by volunteers and donations. Both are always welcome.

November 2012

November is the “Thanks Giving” Month and the Putney Food shelf would like to take this time to give thanks to the Putney community, donors, and supporters.

December 2012

Update on the Thanksgiving Baskets – how many people received a basket. Thank you to the people (volunteers, Putney Central School, donors, etc.) who helped with this endeavor. What was in the baskets this year.

Other iPutney blurb ideas:

- Solicit items needed: Examples - Refrigerator, scale, and cheese cutter
- Thank you PCS and TGS and Greenwood students
  - Also send to Reformer and school newsletters with pictures
- Volunteers needed (posted when we have a specific need)
- Thank you to Landmark College
- Vermont Foodbank relationship: glean, sort, donate
- General Thank you
- Empty Shelves (when needed)
- Fresh produce (summer months)
- PFS gives thanks
- Thanksgiving bounty (how to help our T-giving effort) start this mid-October
- How you can help: donate, $, food, volunteer
- General PFS update or big news when appropriate
- Use pictures

FOUNDATIONS AND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

2012 Goal: $0

PFS would benefit from grant funding to help finance:
- acquiring capital goods such as refrigerators, freezers, shelving, cutting boards, knives, packaging materials
- operating costs such as rental space, food purchases, holiday gift baskets
- implementing an annual campaign

Research will need to be completed to find grants that best suit the needs of the PFS.
THE PUTNEY FOOD SHELF

To find potential grants:

Vermont Community Foundation offers a searchable directory of foundations that offer grants to organizations that focus on the needs of Vermonter (http://fdovermont.foundationcenter.org/). The search suggestions below are only a few possibilities:

- “Fields of Interests” that can be explored include: Economically Disadvantaged, Food Banks, General Charitable Giving, and Nutrition.
- “Types of Support” that can be explored include: Annual Campaigns, Donated Products, and General Operating Support.

ON-GOING AND ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

On Going:
- Send thank you notes as donations are received
- Post a semi-annual fundraising report on iPutney
- Send the annual “Thank You Letter” to the Brattleboro Reformer (Fall)
- Annual Letter Carriers Day (June) – postal workers collect donations

501(c)(3) Status:
- Contact a lawyer: pro bono or discounted rate for a non-profit
- Complete all necessary documents
- Apply for status

Other Fundraising Event Suggestions:
- Annual Silent Auction
- A musical benefit
- Putney Community Dinners – sponsors a food drive at one of the suppers (annually?)

Annual Appeal:
Reasons to mail to Putney area:
- Reach anyone in need (does everyone know about the PFS that needs food assistance?)
- Build awareness that we are a solid functioning, helping food pantry
- Build support through donations (food, money, volunteers)

Process:
- Create an appeal letter, donation form, return envelope
  - Letter, outer envelope, #9 remit envelope mailed to Putney area = $1000+
  - Self-mailer mailed to Putney area = $700 (postage for area is about $305)
- Collect stories, quotes, &/or reasons why people need the PFS for supplemental food to add to the appeal letter (Lost jobs, Fixed incomes, disabilities, tough economy, illness, medical bills)
- Look into potential for credit card donations online through JustGive.org or Network for Good
  - 3% fee to JustGive.org per transaction
  - Fee undetermined for Network for Good
THE PUTNEY FOOD SHELF

- Obtain a list of Putney addresses
- Send appeal letter
- Compile names and contact information of donors to be used for future solicitations
- Send Thank You notes as donations are received

- A Gantt Chart was created to examine the flow of the 1st Annual Appeal Campaign. Gantt Charts look at a project or a certain piece of a project, as in this case, over a timeline from planning to completion and identifies the timeframe in which tasks will be accomplished to reach the goal or a set of goals. Once the project has been implemented, the Gantt Chart can also be used to assigning tasks.

Gantt Chart for 1st Annual Appeal Campaign

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meet with Steering Committee &amp; Other Key Players</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan Annual Appeal Campaign Details</td>
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<td>Create Annual Appeal Campaign Budget</td>
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<tr>
<td>Set Target Goals (Number of Donors, Donation Goals)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create Appeal Letter, Donation Forms, Return Envelopes</td>
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<td>Create a Donor Registry Tool</td>
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<td>Create a Data Gather Tool for Monitoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify Target Population</td>
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<td>Purchase Address List</td>
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<tr>
<td>Define and Assign Roles &amp; Responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training: Answering Questions, Handling Mail Volume, Processing Payments, Writing Thank You Notes, Updating Donor Registry Files, Updating Data Gathering Tools</td>
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<td>Send Annual Appeal Letter &amp; Associated Documents</td>
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<td>Receive Donations from Annual Appeal Campaign</td>
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<td>Analyze Monitoring Data</td>
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<td>Identify and Implement Project Changes (as needed)</td>
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<td>Compile Data</td>
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<td>Analyze Data</td>
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<td>Report on Statistics and Findings: Data Analysis, Conclusions, Lessons Learned, Areas of Improvement</td>
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<td>Submit to Steering Committee for Comments</td>
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<td>Write Final Report</td>
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## Appendix 8. Putney Interagency Group Reference and Referral Sheet

### Putney Interagency

#### Referral and Resource Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Number</th>
<th>911</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VT Information Helpline</td>
<td>211</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additions/Recovery</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA Answering Service</td>
<td>257-7785</td>
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<tr>
<td>Al-Anon</td>
<td>(866)972-5266</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narcotics Anon.</td>
<td>773-5575</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phoenix House</td>
<td>257-1147</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retreat Healthcare</td>
<td>257-7785</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Services</td>
<td>257-0361</td>
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<td>AIDS</td>
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<td>AIDS Project of So. VT</td>
<td>254-4444</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anonymous HIV Test</td>
<td>257-8860</td>
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<td>Planned Parenthood</td>
<td>257-0534</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children/Seniors Protection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Protective Services</td>
<td>241-3918</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boys and Girls Club</td>
<td>254-5990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Abuse Hotline</td>
<td>(800)649-5285</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prevent Child Abuse</td>
<td>244-5373</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children/Youth/Family Services</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys and Girls Club</td>
<td>254-5990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting Waters YMCA</td>
<td>246-1036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Services</td>
<td>257-0361</td>
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<tr>
<td>Putney Family Services</td>
<td>387-2120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Education Services</td>
<td>254-3742</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental Health/Family Crisis</td>
<td>(800)622-4235</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Childcare Referrals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Windham Childcare Assoc.</td>
<td>254-5332</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Area Parent Child Ctr.</td>
<td>886-5242</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clothing and Thrift Shops</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Care Net Pregnancy Center</td>
<td>254-6734</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Baby clothes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Bible Chapel</td>
<td>254-2910</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Chance Shoppe</td>
<td>365-7196</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valley Cares Thrift Shop</td>
<td>365-7234</td>
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<td>Brattleboro Exp. Goods</td>
<td>254-5200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brattleboro Drop In</td>
<td>257-2005</td>
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| Credit Counseling | (800)327-6778 |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dental – Children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VT Dept. for Children &amp; Families Economic Services</td>
<td>(800)479-6151</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Education Services</td>
<td>254-3742</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disabilities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Families First</td>
<td>275-4919</td>
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<td>VT Center for the Deaf</td>
<td>25-3921</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCIL</td>
<td>254-6851</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winston Prouty Center</td>
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<tr>
<th>Domestic Violence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Freedom Center</td>
<td>(800)773-0689</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 Hour Hotline</td>
<td>(800)228-7395</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agape Church</td>
<td>257-4069</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Drop In</td>
<td>254-0420</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brattleboro Area Drop In</td>
<td>257-5415</td>
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<tr>
<td>Putney Food Shelf</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Food (Meals)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brattleboro Senior Meals</td>
<td>257-1236</td>
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<tr>
<td>Putney Community Suppers</td>
<td>387-4102</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agape Christian Fellowship</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Baptist</td>
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<th>Food (Meals on Wheels)</th>
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<td>Putney Cares</td>
<td>387-5593</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCIL</td>
<td>254-6851</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS Project</td>
<td>254-8263</td>
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THE PUTNEY FOOD SHELF

**Food Stamps**
SNAP/3SquaresVT  (800)479-6151

**Health Clinics**
Putney Walk-In  387-2120
Planned Parenthood  257-0534
Brattleboro Walk-In  257-6536

**Housing**
First Baptist Church  257-5415
(Emergency Homeless Shelter)
Youth Services  257-0361
Morningside Shelter  257-0066
Brattleboro Housing Auth.  254-6071
Windham Housing Trust  254-4604

**Low Income Assistance**
SEVCA  254-2795
VCIL  254-6851
Legal Aid  769-9164

**Poison**
Hotline  (800)222-1222
Childhood Lead  (800)439-8550

**Pregnancy and Parenting**
CareNet Pregnancy  254-6734
Planned Parenthood  257-0534
Early Education Serv.  254-3742
New Mom’s Group  257-8826
Families First/Disab.  464-9633
VT Dept. for Children & Families
(Child Dev. Div.)  257-7852
Parents’ Assistance Line  (800)649-4357

**Transportation**
Town and Village Bus  (888)869-6287
Brattleboro Beeline  254-4541
Brattleboro Taxi  254-6446

**Seniors Resources**
The Gathering Place  254-6559
(Senior Day Care)
Seniors Help Line  (800)642-5119