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# GUIDE TO CONVENING A WORKING GROUP FOR A FOOD BANK NUTRITION POLICY

PREPARED BY UC BERKELEY CENTER FOR WEIGHT AND HEALTH



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# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	4
COMMUNICATING WITH THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS .....	4
SELECTING A CHAIRPERSON AND CO-CHAIR.....	4
RECRUITING THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO BE INVOLVED.....	5
Identifying And Recruiting Working Group Members.....	5
Identifying And Recruiting Reviewers .....	6
PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS.....	6
Meeting Time And Location .....	7
Agenda Planning.....	7
Suggested Agendas For 4 Meetings Of The Working Group .....	8
FACILITATING SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP.....	8
Tips for Chairperson And Co-chair .....	8
APPENDICES .....	10
A. Chairperson's Detailed Agendas for 4 Meetings .....	11
A1. 1st Meeting - Suggested Agenda.....	11
A2. 2nd Meeting - Suggested Agenda.....	13
A3. 3rd Meeting - Suggested Agenda.....	15
A4. 4th Meeting - Suggested Agenda.....	16
B. Anticipating Stakeholder Questions And Concerns.....	17
C. Handling Difficult Meeting Situations And Meeting Conflict.....	21

# INTRODUCTION

People often say, “What’s so difficult about running meetings? What’s to learn?” But most people who try it, especially for the first few times, find it quite challenging. It requires work and skill. But the skills can be learned. Even for seasoned chairpersons or meeting facilitators, skills can always be honed. Think about meetings you have attended and the issues that have made them either a good or a bad experience. Those are the kinds of meeting challenges that require preparation, techniques and resources to make a food bank working group a positive experience for all who participate.

This guide is intended to help food banks in the process of developing a nutrition policy, particularly on how to convene a group of stakeholders to develop and refine a nutrition policy. It is mainly directed to the chairperson and the co-chair of the working group who should coordinate and lead the effort. The guide gives suggestions for who should be involved in the development of the policy and outlines a process for convening a working group. The process has been used successfully by food banks we have worked with in the field. Tips are given for creating a work plan and schedule of meetings to get the policy drafted and reviewed, thinking through the details of each meeting, facilitating groups, including anticipating and handling stakeholder issues that may arise in the course of policy development.

## COMMUNICATING WITH THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ABOUT THE INTENT TO DEVELOP A NUTRITION POLICY

The food bank’s Board of Directors usually sets policy for the organization and should be informed of plans to develop a nutrition policy. Initial communication with the Board is usually best done by the Executive Director (ED) or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) preferably in writing so that it’s part of the written record of the Board.

Communication with the Board should include the rationale for developing a nutrition policy, a list of potential members of the working group, the intent to consult all key stakeholder groups for input and review of the policy and the expected time frame when the draft will be presented to the Board for approval. A slide presentation (such as the one prepared by the Center for Weight and Health) about the rationale for a policy would be a useful tool to enlist Board support for policy development.

Several of our food bank colleagues have adapted and shown the presentation to their Boards, management and staff and found it to be very useful in garnering support for policy development.

## SELECTING A CHAIRPERSON AND CO-CHAIR

Good leadership is essential for successful meetings and obtaining wide support for the development of a nutrition policy. Select a competent chairperson and co-chair based on skills in leadership and meeting facilitation and with a commitment to develop a nutrition policy. You, the person reading this guide, may be the best candidate to chair or facilitate a working group. If there is someone else who meets the criteria and you would rather not chair, then volunteer to be the co-chair and take on the organizational tasks, which can steer the group in the right direction. The ED or another senior staff person in the food bank or on the Board may be willing to be the chair, though this is not essential.

The co-chair should be an organized person to assist with planning and facilitating meetings, recording meeting minutes and following through on action items. The suggestions in this guide are written for the chairperson and co-chair.



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## ROLES OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND CO-CHAIR

The main role of the chairperson is to ensure that working group recommendations are included in the draft policy as appropriate. Ultimately, the decision about what the policy contains rests with the ED and Board. The working group is to advise on the scope and content of a nutrition policy for approval. Other roles of the chairperson and co-chair are to:

- Develop a work plan and schedule/timeline for meetings.
- Plan the number and duration of meetings needed and include these details in letters of invitation to prospective members of the working group.
- Identify and recruit working group members and reviewers.
- Plan agendas for working group meetings.
- Facilitate the meetings, soliciting the full range of viewpoints from stakeholder groups and encouraging creative solutions to challenging issues raised by stakeholders.
- Draft the policy, incorporating suggestions and ideas from working group members and reviewers.
- Revise as needed and finalize the draft to be submitted to the Board and Executive Director.

- Summarize the issues and range of views raised by stakeholders and how these were taken into consideration for reference.

## RECRUITING THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO BE INVOLVED

The right people are those affected by the proposed policy. They are the key stakeholders and include the types of people in the checklist of internal and external stakeholders below.

## IDENTIFYING AND RECRUITING WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

Each of the stakeholders on the list below will have a different perspective or ‘stake’ in changing the foods distributed by the food bank. Therefore, all should have a say in what the policy contains. Considerations in convening your ‘dream team’ for the working group include: getting a representative spectrum of views to help shape the policy, obtaining support of senior decision-makers in key positions affected (such as procurement, receiving, etc.), involving people who are hard-working team players, are prepared to express their views, cooperate and get the job done. Seek the opinion of the ED regarding recommendations. Also, involving the ED and a Board member in the working group is recommended if possible, to enlist their

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS Who work in or are closely connected with the food bank		EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS Others affected by food bank policies and practices	
1. Board Member	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Client	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Executive Director/ CEO	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Donor	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Staff- Finance	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Wholesale vendor	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Staff- Information-Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Partner agency (grocery or meal program)	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Staff- Food Sourcing	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Cooperative Extension or Health Professional	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Staff- Fundraising	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Staff- Warehousing	<input type="checkbox"/>		
8. Staff- Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>		
9. Staff- Nutritionist	<input type="checkbox"/>		
10. Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>		

support for policy adoption and implementation. Typically, task-oriented working groups operate best with a small number, say 6 to 10 people.

Send a written invitation to prospective working group members. Include in your invitation:

- The purpose of the group (i.e., To provide advice on the development of a nutrition policy)
- That as a member their viewpoints are important to the policy
- The frequency and times of meetings
- Outline expectations:
  - Attend all meetings.
  - Advise on the scope of the policy.
  - Contribute views, as a representative of a specific stakeholder group (e.g., food bank staff member, donor, pantry, etc.).
  - Help find solutions to resolve any differences.
  - Help to finalize a draft nutrition policy to submit to the Board and ED.

Also mention work that will be expected between meetings. The next section has a suggested plan for four meetings to develop a draft policy, obtain input and make revisions. Advise potential members to notify and get approval from their supervisors for participation in the group

## IDENTIFYING AND RECRUITING REVIEWERS

Other stakeholders or groups that don't participate on the working group also need to have input to the policy. Usually this is best done by requesting at least one representative of each group be reviewers of the draft policy. Include in the invitation the importance of their input to a nutrition policy, give a timeline and expected dates of work required and anticipated time commitment. Note that since not all people are comfortable providing feedback in writing, you should also offer in your invitation to receive feedback in a short meeting or phone call after they review the draft policy.

## PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

Good planning usually pays off in smooth meetings and happy participants.

## MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

Select a convenient time and location for the meetings. This will contribute to attendance and performance of the group. There should be good lighting, tables for members to spread their papers as well as access to public transportation and parking for stakeholders external to the food bank.

**“We worked with folks across the food bank and outside the food bank during the policy development process. When we launched, the staff were very welcoming [of the nutrition policy], especially the food procurement team. Many of our local donors are interested in what we are doing and the positive health impact we can make. Working together all along ensured their support during implementation.”**

-Food Banker, Healthy Options, Healthy Meals Project 2012

## AGENDA PLANNING

Carefully plan the important tasks needed to create a nutrition policy. We recommend four meetings of the working group. Suggested agendas and outlines are listed below and more information is in Appendix A. These can be adapted to fit the needs of the working group. While planning the agendas be sure to remember the following:

- Plan for a mixture of activities, speakers and dialogue to keep people engaged.
- Consider the best ways to frame questions to bring people out in the discussion. (e.g., “There is a range of opinion about [XYZ]. Can you share your view and a little about your reasoning?”)



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- Allow plenty of time for discussion. The purpose of the meetings is to get the views of the group, not to talk at them.
- Don’t plan an overly full agenda or add last minute items at the meeting.
- Carefully plan the time allotted for each agenda item. Stick to the times. If you need to extend a discussion, seek agreement of the group to modify the agenda and/or meeting finish time.
- Plan agenda items to make important points quickly, but ensure that all members are in agreement before you move to the next item.

We suggest that the chairperson have annotated agendas. These contain background information with key points and notes to help keep the agenda on track. Make notes on the agenda so you don’t have to refer to other documents during the meeting. List the materials needed for the meeting as a reminder prior to the meeting.

## SUGGESTED AGENDAS FOR 4 MEETINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP

We prepared suggested agendas for each of four meetings to draft a nutrition policy, obtain stakeholder input and revise the draft to submit for approval. The brief agendas (to hand out to members) are shown on the following page, and the chairperson’s annotated agendas for each of the 4 meetings are included in Appendix A.

Send out copies of agendas ahead of time and have copies of agendas and handouts at the meetings.

**If possible, obtain food inventory information for use at the meeting**, covering the past several years. Such information often proves useful in the discussion about which types of foods to include and to prioritize in the nutrition policy. Helpful information from inventory reports includes:

- Percent of total inventory from each source - donations, purchased, government (e.g., 15% purchased, 65% donations, 20% government)
- Pounds of the following types of food distributed over the past 1-3 years:

### IN THE ‘FOODS TO ENCOURAGE’ GROUPS:

1. Fruits and vegetables
2. Grain foods and how much of these were whole grains

3. Dairy foods and how much of these were low-fat or non-fat
4. Meats, poultry and fish and how much of these were lean

#### **IN THE FOODS TO REDUCE GROUPS:**

1. Sugar-sweetened beverages (not including 100% juice)
2. Sweet and savory snack foods

Compiling such information may be difficult because many food banks do not record the details about the fat, sodium or whole-grain content of foods. Start early and work closely with IT or inventory control staff to compile the best information available. Most food banks can access information about some of the food groups such as quantities of fruits and vegetables, sweetened beverages and snack foods received. It is useful also

to consider where information is lacking so that protocols for receiving and documentation can later be strengthened to track progress on the policy.

## **FACILITATING SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP**

### **TIPS FOR CHAIRPERSON AND CO-CHAIR**

In the previous sections, we covered the main aspects of planning and preparing for meetings. In this section, we review information about conducting the meetings. There are thousands of resources to help people with chairing meetings. Most resources advise similar approaches for good chairmanship.

## **SUGGESTED AGENDAS**

### **MEETING 1:**

#### **Getting Started**

1. Welcome and introduce members (10 minutes)
2. Outline the meeting plan, expectations for working group members and meeting guidelines (20 minutes)
3. Present slides and discuss rationale and benefits of a food bank nutrition policy (20 minutes)
4. Review elements of a sound nutrition policy and distribute examples of policy (20 minutes)
5. Discuss scope of the policy and member questions and concerns (40 minutes)
6. Wrap-up (10 minutes)

### **MEETING 2:**

#### **Making Decisions, Advising Policy Drafters**

1. Welcome members and review meeting goals (10 minutes)
2. Discuss the sources of food to be covered in the policy (25 minutes)
3. Discuss the foods/ food groups to be covered (45 minutes)
4. Discuss preferred wording and definitions in the policy (20 minutes)
5. Wrap-up (10 minutes)

### **MEETING 3:**

#### **Reviewing and Discussing the Draft Policy**

1. Welcome members and review meeting goals (10 minutes)
2. Obtain feedback on each section of the draft policy, including feedback from reviewers (50 minutes)
3. Discuss areas of agreement, disagreement, options for resolving differences and recommended revisions (50 minutes)
4. Wrap-up (10 minutes)

### **MEETING 4:**

#### **Finalizing Draft and Celebrating Completion**

1. Welcome and review meeting goals (10 minutes)
2. Review feedback from members and reviewers, and identify key issues of concern for each section of the policy (30 minutes)
3. Discuss options for addressing concerns, disagreement and decide on revisions (50 minutes)
4. Summarize the revisions that will be made in the final version of the policy.(20 minutes)
5. Wrap-up and celebrate completion of draft policy!

We have summarized some basic meeting dos and don'ts, adapted from the Community ToolBox<sup>1</sup> and added a few of our own. Below we comment on a few dos and don'ts.

**Start and end meetings on time.** Keep to the times on the agenda. This should be a responsibility of the co-chair or a timekeeper. If the group needs to go beyond the agreed time to accomplish the objectives for the meeting, ask for agreement from all members. For example you could say, “We've already used our allotted time for this issue, but we haven't reached consensus. Would you be willing continue on this discussion for 10 minutes to come to a decision?” If some people are not willing or able to continue, be ready to compromise. Shorten later agenda items or carry them over to the next meeting.

**Use the power of your position wisely.** Stay neutral in order to solicit divergent viewpoints and encourage creative thinking. Avoid taking sides. Remind people of the meeting guidelines you set at the first meeting (See Appendix A: 1st Meeting- Suggested

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from “Conducting Effective Meetings” on the Community Tool Box by the University of Kansas, available at: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/group-facilitation/main>

Agenda) such as one person talks at a time and everyone needs to contribute their views before the same person speaks .

#### Manage meetings by:

- Using a sense of humor,
- Using open-ended questions to encourage discussion,
- Watching for signs that it's time to slow down or speed up,
- Guiding the meeting and discussion; not controlling it, and
- Asking for someone's opinion directly.

**Summarize.** Wrap-up each agenda item by summarizing the conclusions, recommendations or actions. At the end of the meeting, identify action items, the responsible person and the due date.

More information is provided in the Appendices B&C:

*Anticipating Stakeholder Questions And Concerns, Handling Difficult Meeting Situations and Meeting Conflict.*

## MEETING DOS AND DON'TS



# APPENDICES



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## CHAIRPERSON'S DETAILED AGENDA

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### 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting-Suggested Agenda

#### GETTING STARTED

1. Welcome and introduce members (10 minutes)
2. Outline the meeting plan, expectations for working group members and meeting guidelines (20 minutes)
3. Present slides and discuss rationale and benefits of a food bank nutrition policy (20 minutes)
4. Review elements of a sound nutrition policy and distribute examples of policy (20 minutes)
5. Discuss scope of the policy and member questions and concerns (40 minutes)
6. Wrap-up (10 minutes)

**SUGGESTED TIME:** 2 hours (No one objects if the meeting finishes early)

**BRING TO THE MEETING:** Copies of agenda, copies of example food bank nutrition policy with optional policy supplement, copies of the *Guide to Drafting a Food Bank Nutrition Policy* laptop and projector for slide presentation.

#### 1. Welcome and introduce members (10 minutes)

- Introduce the chair, co-chair and recorder (if different from the co-chair).
- Indicate that members were chosen because they are decision-makers at the food bank or others with a stake in the policy who are willing to contribute to the draft of a policy. They were chosen to bring different viewpoints on how the policy might affect different stakeholder groups.
- Invite group members to briefly introduce themselves.
- Check with group to see if they believe anyone else should be invited to participate. Suggestions can be considered.

#### 2. Outline the meeting plan, expectations for working group members and meeting guidelines (20 minutes)

- Explain that the goal of the working group is to develop a draft nutrition policy to be presented for approval by the Board of Directors and Executive Director. The policy should have the support of all stakeholders. It is intended to be a working document and not to sit on a shelf.
- Present an overview of the meetings:

**Meeting 1** - Introductions and briefing on the need for and process for developing a nutrition policy; preparation for the next meeting.

**Meeting 2** - Discussion and decisions on foods to be included and prioritized in the nutrition policy.

**Between Meeting 2 and 3**- Preparation of first draft by the chairperson and co-chair; circulation to working group members and reviewers for review.

**Meeting 3** - Discussion of member comments and concerns and decisions about revisions.

**Between Meeting 3 and 4** - Preparation of second draft policy and identification of issues of concern or disagreement; circulation to members, reviewers and other stakeholders for review and comment.

**Meeting 4** - Discussion of feedback and agreement on final draft for Board approval.

- Present suggested ground rules for meetings and establish agreement. Review at the beginning of each meeting. These could include:
  - Members raise their hand to be recognized to speak.
  - Everyone speaks on a particular topic before anyone speaks a second time.
  - Members are free and encouraged to express candid and diverse opinions and keep comments productive and directed towards the task at hand.
  - People listen without interrupting.

- The chairperson can intervene to keep time or when members speak off topic.
- One person speaks at a time. Discourage side conversations.
- No cell phone use or emailing during the meeting.
- Decide on the method of making decisions. Options include writing different views on white board/butcher paper, brainstorming solutions, seeking consensus or majority vote with dissents noted in the minutes.

**3. Present slides and discuss rationale and benefits of a food bank nutrition policy (20 minutes)**

- Deliver a presentation on the health and diet rationale for a nutrition policy.
- Discuss the presentation- Q and A, concerns, etc.

**4. Review elements of a sound nutrition policy and distribute example policy (20 minutes)**

- If group is large, ask members to pair up and review example policy and supplement on foods to reduce, identify strengths and weaknesses of these example. (about 5 minutes)
- Have a large group discussion of important elements of a sound nutrition policy including the purpose, rationale, benefits, food sources, types of foods to encourage and/or reduce and those to prioritize. Explain that these sections will drive the format for the second meeting when decisions about the policy will be made. (about 15 minutes)

**5. Discuss scope of the policy and member questions and concerns (40 minutes)**

- Get initial reaction from group members about the types of foods they would like to see the nutrition policy to address (only ‘Food to Encourage’ or also *foods to reduce*).
- Discuss which sources of food they think the nutrition policy will cover.
- Note any concerns expressed about developing the policy and allow time for discussion of those.

**6. Wrap-up (10 minutes)**

- Distribute *Guide to Drafting a Nutrition Policy* and ask working group members to prepare for the next meeting by reviewing the guide with example policy and supplement and thinking about the types and sources of food to be covered in the policy at this food bank. Here are some questions to think about, which will affect policy implementation:
  - What types of food should be prioritized?
  - Should the focus be on foods currently received by the food bank or also on foods that will fit the nutrition profile desired on the policy?
  - Should the policy start small and focus only on foods the food bank purchases or should it cover all food sources?
  - How will an increase in healthful foods affect food bank work?
  - What effect will the policy have on different departments at the food bank?
  - How will we track changes to monitor our progress on meeting the policy?
- Ask members to note down any ideas and suggestions they have and bring to the next meeting.

## CHAIRPERSON'S DETAILED AGENDA

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### 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting-Suggested Agenda

#### MAKING DECISIONS, ADVISING POLICY DRAFTERS

1. Welcome members and review meeting goals (10 minutes)
2. Discuss the sources of foods to be covered in the policy (25 minutes)
3. Discuss the foods/ food groups to be covered (45 minutes)
4. Discuss preferred wording and definition of terms in the policy (20 minutes)
5. Wrap-up (10 minutes)

SUGGESTED TIME: ~2 hours

**BRING TO THE MEETING:** Copies of agenda and inventory reports, large flip charts and markers for brainstorming.

#### 1. Welcome members and review meeting goals (10 minutes)

- Welcome members and review ground rules established at the first meeting.
- Explain that the goal of this meeting is to identify the types and sources of foods and beverages to be addressed in the food bank nutrition policy.

#### 2. Discuss the sources of foods to be covered in the policy (25 minutes)

- Brainstorm activity: Weigh the pros and cons of including purchased, donated and USDA foods in the nutrition policy.
  - Have group members split into pairs. Give each pair a copy of the inventory report and three sheets of paper. Have them write *donated*, *purchased* and *USDA* on the top of the papers and draw two columns labeled *pros* and *cons* on the next page.
  - Have the pairs generate a list of pros and cons for including each of the inventory sources in the nutrition policy. Allow 10 minutes for this activity.
- In the large group, have one person from each pair report on the pros and cons of addressing each of the three sources of food. See example summary of pros and cons.
- Using the previously agreed upon method of decision making, determine which sources of food will be included in the policy.

#### 3. Discuss the foods/food groups that should be covered in policy (45 minutes)

- Review categories of food in the example policies and the inventory report. Discuss and then decide on whether to include only Feeding America's 'Foods to Encourage' or to also include foods to reduce.
- Break into small groups or pairs to discuss which food groups to include: whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean proteins, fresh fruits and vegetables, sweet snacks, savory snacks, and/or sugar sweetened beverages.
- Transition back to large group discussion and discuss any food groups members would like to exclude. Write responses of a flip chart. Summarize the discussion and make a final decision.

#### 4. Discuss preferred wording and definition of terms in the policy (20 minutes)

- Summarize what decisions have been made on sources and food/beverage groups to be included in the policy.
- Give group members an opportunity to share with the assigned draft writers how sections of the policy should be worded and how terms should be defined.

#### 5. Wrap-up (10 minutes)

- Explain that chairperson and co-chair will prepare a first draft of the policy based on the advice of the working group at the meeting.
- They will circulate the draft to members of the group by [Date].
- Members should come prepared to share comments on draft at next meeting.

**PROS AND CONS OF SOURCES OF FOODS TO BE COVERED: SAMPLE RESPONSES**

DONATED INVENTORY	
PROS	CONS
1. Clients want healthy food.	1. May upset food donors.
2. Appealing to financial donors whose money is spent on healthful foods.	2. Don't have control over this food.
3. Largest source of inventory.	

PURCHASED INVENTORY	
PROS	CONS
1. Clients want healthy food.	1. May be more expensive.
2. Appealing to financial donors whose money is spent on healthful foods.	2. May not be able to find items to meet criteria.
3. Greatest control over this; easiest to change.	3. Smallest source of inventory.

USDA INVENTORY	
PROS	CONS
1. Clients want healthy food.	1. May not be able to get as much food
2. Lots of healthful food available through USDA.	2. Healthy food will use up more of our grant money
3. Fundraising efforts could claim a greater focus on health.	

## CHAIRPERSON'S DETAILED AGENDA

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### 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting-Suggested Agenda

#### REVIEWING AND DISCUSSING THE DRAFT POLICY

1. Welcome members and review meeting goals (10 minutes)
2. Obtain feedback on each section of the draft policy, including feedback from reviewers (50 minutes)
3. Discuss areas of agreement, disagreement, options for resolving differences and recommended revisions (50 minutes)
4. Wrap-up (10 minutes)

**SUGGESTED TIME:** 2 hours

**BEFORE THE MEETING:** At least two weeks before the 3rd meeting, send the draft policy to working group members and reviewers to read and submit comments to the chairperson a week before the meeting. Encourage them to share the draft with others. Comments should answer the following questions: Is the policy written as discussed at the meeting? Do the decisions still seem appropriate? What suggestions do you have for revision and why? Which ones are essential or very important and which ones are less important but desirable from your perspective?

**BRING TO THE MEETING:** Copies of agenda, summary of feedback from members and reviewers.

#### 1. Welcome members and review meeting goals (10 minutes)

- Welcome members and review ground rules established at the first meeting
- Explain that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss feedback, areas of agreement, concerns and disagreement, and identify options for coming to agreement.
- Describe the process for feedback that will be used. Each person will be invited to share comments and answers to these questions:
  - Is the policy written as we discussed at the last meeting?
  - Are you still in agreement with the language and decisions made at the previous meeting?
  - What suggested changes do you have and why?

Which ones are most important?

#### 2. Obtain feedback on each section of the draft policy (50 minutes)

- Identify areas of agreement, concerns and disagreement.
  - Using the process previously outlined, review the policy one section at a time. For example, start with comments on the statement of purpose, then move to policy rationale and benefits, food inventory sources, foods covered by the policy, policy implementation.
  - As members speak, write concerns for each policy section on a flip chart.
  - Present the feedback from reviewers to the group and make notes of areas of agreement and concerns.

#### 3. Discuss areas of agreement, disagreement, options for resolving differences and recommended revisions (50 minutes)

- Summarize points made and identify areas of concern. Discuss potential revisions in each section and make decisions using the previously agreed-on process.

#### 4. Wrap-up (10 minutes)

- Chairperson and co-chair will make edits based on meeting feedback.
- They will send a revised draft to working group members and reviewers. Comments to be sent to chairperson and co-chair one week before the next meeting, if possible.

## CHAIRPERSON'S DETAILED AGENDA

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### 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting-Suggested Agenda

#### FINALIZING DRAFT AND CELEBRATING COMPLETION

1. Welcome members and review meeting goals (10 minutes)
2. Review feedback from members and reviewers, and identify key issues of concern for each section of the policy (30 minutes)
3. Discuss options for addressing concerns, disagreement and decide on revisions (50 minutes)
4. Summarize the revisions that will be made in the final version of the policy (20 minutes)
5. Wrap-up and celebrate completion of draft policy!

**SUGGESTED TIME:** ~2 hours

**BEFORE THE MEETING:** At least two weeks before the meeting, send the revised draft policy to working group members and reviewers to read and submit comments a week before the meeting. Summarize the comments and suggestions before the meeting.

**BRING TO THE MEETING:** Copies of agenda, summary of comments from working group members and reviewers.

#### 1. Welcome members and review meeting goals (10 minutes)

- Welcome members and review ground rules.
- Explain that the purpose of the meeting is to come to agreement on the final draft to be submitted to the Board of Directors and to celebrate success.

#### 2. Identify key areas of agreement and concern for each section of the policy (30 minutes)

- Review comments submitted by working group members and reviewers for each section of the policy.
- Focus on areas of concern.

#### 3. Discuss and decide on revisions (50 minutes)

- Discuss each issue, generate options to address issues and make decisions.

#### 4. Summarize the final revisions to be made to the policy that will be made by chairperson after the meeting and submitted to CEO (20 minutes)

- Review draft with working group members and obtain final agreement.

#### 5. Wrap-up and celebrate completion (10 minutes)

- Explain next steps.
  - Chair and co-chair to revise draft, submit for ED/CEO approval and then present draft to the Board for final approval.
- Celebrate! Take time to appreciate all of the work that led to the development of the policy. Acknowledge how a group of diverse stakeholders successfully worked together.
  - Possibly serve a healthy snack.

## Anticipating Stakeholder Questions And Concerns

Staff and stakeholders may be unfamiliar with food bank nutrition policies. They may have questions and concerns about how the policy will affect them, their work, those who supply foods and those who receive foods from the food bank. You may find that not all food bank staff agrees with the need to consider nutrition in food procurement. They may not support a nutrition policy. Concerns may arise from beliefs that clients may be less satisfied with nutritious foods, that donors will be offended by more restrictions and will discontinue their donations. Others may also question whether it is really all that important or necessary that charitable foods, as a stopgap measure of food assistance, be nutritious.

Staff is also usually concerned with the increase in workload, the many changes in procedures and the need for adequate facilities and staffing to implement the policy. These are legitimate concerns.

How do you deal with these opposing views and concerns when you are advocating for organizational change through a nutrition policy? Experts in advocacy advise that the key is to learn a lot about stakeholders, their views, whether they are allies or opponents and the arguments they use to support their views. Then you can develop responses that may shift their views. Often differing views come from a lack of experience with the types of changes being recommended, misinformation or seeing realistic challenges ahead but with few ideas or optimism about being able to meet them.



PHOTO CREDIT: SCOUTS PICK UP FOOD DONATIONS BY FORT CARSON  
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Some tips from experts in policy advocacy and organizational change:

- 1. Listen and acknowledge all concerns as well as points of view.**
- 2. Assess who is an ally and who is a potential opponent.**
- 3. Seek to understand the arguments and the reasons opponents give for their views.**
- 4. Frame responses by acknowledging concerns.**
- 5. Bring new information that supports policy and change (such as poorer health and poorer diets of pantry clients, and the extent of diet related health problems in low-income populations).**
- 6. Share other perspectives (e.g., from the community, the public health field, opinion leaders).**
  - The food bank network has an ethical obligation to provide healthful foods, given the high prevalence of diabetes and obesity among users.  
- Loel Solomon at Kaiser Permanente Community Benefit Program
  - It's the new frontier of food banking.  
- Bob Aiken, the CEO of Feeding America
- 7. Seek out and report on success stories from other organizations, for example, stories and testimonials from food banks that have adopted nutrition policies, staff comments on the effects on their work, the effects on donations, etc.**

Opponents may shift their position and supporters may strengthen their commitment. Bring new information and perspectives, but be prepared to compromise on the content of the policy as needed to enlist stakeholder support. Advise a review in a few months to discuss stakeholder experiences and fine tune the policy as needed.

We've taken a few examples of concerns and objections that we have heard expressed about nutrition policies and prepared some potential talking points based on the advocacy tips. These may be useful as examples you can adapt to concerns and objections of stakeholders involved in your food bank. We also incorporated many of these ideas in the slide presentation we prepared for use in persuading food bankers to adopt a nutrition policy. Even so, be prepared. *You can't win over all of the people all of the time.*

## CONCERN 1:

**“A few foods from a pantry are not going to make or break the quality of client diets or their health.”**

A few suggestions for responding:

### ACKNOWLEDGE:

“Several food bankers have expressed this view. One reason is that pantries aim to provide only a few days worth of food to tie households over until other resources kick in. So it is reasonable to ask whether 3 days of healthful foods can make any positive difference to clients or indeed whether a few days worth of less healthful foods hurt clients.”

### INFORMATION TO CONSIDER:

- Three days worth of foods per month translates to 10% of the household food supply.
- If that 10% is made up mainly of healthful foods that does contribute to some improvement in diet quality of clients.
- National survey data shows that a lot of people consume no vegetables (other than fried potatoes) and very little fruit. Taking home a bag of apples, oranges and broccoli will contribute to an increase in monthly intake of fruits and vegetables in the household.
- National data from a recent study of food bank clients show that most people come back each month. Foods from the pantry are a regular source and healthful foods could make a positive and regular difference to the diet quality of household members over time.
- A recent Feeding America study found that over one third of people visiting food pantries had used a food pantry for more than 28 consecutive months- so the potential to influence diet quality can be in the longer term.<sup>2</sup>

- If the pantry supplies several bottles of soda and a box of candy, (contributing minimal nutrients and lots of excess calories), it may be adding to the problem of obesity and other diet-related health outcomes if it happens regularly.
- UC Berkeley conducted an inventory study on 6 California food banks, some of which aimed to decrease soda and candy but they were still distributing considerable quantities, even though it was a small proportion of the weight of their total inventory. In one food bank for example, the amount of soda distributed translated into 208 billion calories per year going to low-income households that use food pantries.<sup>3</sup>
- Low-income populations, including those that are food insecure tend to have poorer health and higher rates of diet-related disease than the general public. Receiving any amount of healthful foods from the pantry can contribute to improved diet quality and eating habits.

### OTHER PERSPECTIVES TO CONSIDER:

- The CEO of Feeding America suggests that nutrition is the new frontier of food banking. That food banks have an obligation to ensure that a significant percentage of the food clients receive is healthful.
- By providing healthful foods, food banks are showing good corporate responsibility and good citizenship in the communities they serve. Other organizations like schools and work places are also providing healthful foods.

Note that the slide presentation from week 2 of the course **Presentation on the health and diet rationale for having a nutrition policy** includes persuasive information and perspectives that elevate the reasons beyond individual clients receiving a few days of foods.

<sup>2</sup> Weinfield NS, Mills G, Borger C, Gearing M, Macaluso T, Montaquila J, Zedlewski S. Hunger in America 2014, National Report Prepared for Feeding America. Available at: <http://www.resourcelibrary.gcyf.org/sites/gcyf.org/files/resources/2014/hunger-inamerica-2014-full-report.pdf>. Accessed January 26, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Ross M, Campbell E, Webb KL. Recent trends in the nutritional quality of food and beverage inventory of food banks; case studies of six California food banks. J Hunger Environ Nutr. 2013;8(3):294-309.

## CONCERN 2:

**“We have no right to limit the foods we hand out.  
Clients want and have the right to choose.”**

A few suggestions for responding:

### ACKNOWLEDGE:

*“It’s an important point you make that food banks and pantries are there to assist clients and provide them with the foods they want and need.”*

### INFORMATION TO CONSIDER:

- Three recent studies of several hundred pantry clients have shown that clients prefer to receive nutritious foods because they are healthful and because they are the most expensive to purchase.<sup>4,4,5</sup>
- Their top ranking food preferences from pantries were fruits, vegetables, lean meats and dairy foods.
- The results of these same surveys showed that clients don’t consider it important to receive foods and beverages like sugar-sweetened beverages, savory snacks, and sweets through the charitable food network. They rank these types of foods and beverages lowest among 16 different food groups.
- Clients already have access to these types of foods in their neighborhoods because they are inexpensive and available everywhere. They do have choices about what they include in their diets.

### OTHER PERSPECTIVES TO CONSIDER:

- Due to the widespread concern about overweight and diabetes, food provider organizations in communities are being urged to make their offerings more healthful. Policies and guidelines are being enacted at the federal, state and local level to push for these changes to happen. For example, healthful foods are becoming more commonly available in community settings like schools, worksites, restaurants and corner stores.
- If we are concerned about being client-centered, research shows that clients want healthful foods. In other words, nutrition-focused food banking is client-centered food banking.

<sup>4</sup> Campbell E, Hudson H, Webb K, Crawford PB. Food preferences of users of the emergency food system. J Hunger Environ Nutr. 2011; 6(2):179–187.

<sup>5</sup> Webb K, Campbell E, Ross M, Crawford P. Improving the Nutritional Quality of Foods Distributed to Lower-Income Families Through Emergency Food Services: A Study of Nutrition-Related Policies and Practices of Food Banks and Food Pantries. Available at: [http://cwh.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/primary\\_pdfs/Improving\\_the\\_Nutritional\\_Quality\\_of\\_Foods\\_Distributed\\_to\\_Lower-Income\\_Families\\_through\\_Emergency\\_Food\\_Services\\_6.12\\_o.pdf](http://cwh.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/primary_pdfs/Improving_the_Nutritional_Quality_of_Foods_Distributed_to_Lower-Income_Families_through_Emergency_Food_Services_6.12_o.pdf). Accessed January 26, 2015.

## CONCERN 3:

***“We may lose donors if we discourage less healthful foods.”***

A few suggestions for responding:

### ACKNOWLEDGE:

*“This is a common and legitimate concern when food banks first begin to consider introducing a nutrition policy.”*

### INFORMATION TO CONSIDER:

- As more food banks adopt nutrition policies and new practices, they are finding that they are not losing significant donations.
- Inventory reviews conducted by food banks that have declined donations of particular foods and beverages showed they did not lose other donations of more healthful foods from those donors.
- In fact, such food banks have reported that most donors will still donate their other products because they still wish to donate and also to receive a tax deduction.

### OTHER PERSPECTIVES TO CONSIDER:

- Some food banks around the country have successfully adopted policies to decline soda and other foods, including The Food Bank of Central NY, the Alameda County Community Food Bank and Good Shepherd Food Bank in Maine. You may wish to contact someone at these food banks to find out more about their experiences.

- These and several other food bankers have said that it was easier than they anticipated to discuss their nutrition policy with donors and that they maintained good relationships with them.
- Part of the process of implementing a nutrition policy is to identify sources of new and more healthful foods to replace the potential loss of less healthful food.
- Several food banks have reported attracting new donors because of their focus on nutrition.
- It is becoming clear that there is a cultural shift in food banks across the country to take client nutrition and health considerations into account in making food procurement decisions. The number of food banks developing and implementing nutrition policies is increasing. Feeding America’s Diabetes Project, and the first ever summit between food bankers and local and state health departments are also examples of this trend.
- The shift towards nutrition can be seen as an opportunity. Food banks such as the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank report that focusing on client health opens up new funding streams from health-focused grant-making bodies and foundations.
- For many food banks, the potential to contribute to better client diets is motivating change, outweighing initial concern over losing donor support.

## Handling Difficult Meeting Situations<sup>6</sup>

Beyond using good meeting practices, as summarized in the meeting do's and don'ts, additional tips are sometimes useful for handling particularly difficult situations that might arise during a meeting.

- **A person tends to dominate the discussion.** Remind the person of the meeting guideline that everyone can speak on a particular topic before anyone speaks a second time. Use questions directed to other members to draw them out. Say directly something like, “I want to hear from others now.” or “This is an interesting conversation, but we need to move on if we are going to accomplish our tasks for this meeting.”
- **A person wants to argue.** This usually irritates the group and the situation may become tense. Use direct questions to other participants to invite responses to another question or topic. However, you may have to be very direct, requesting the member to leave this argument for now and come back to the task at hand and allow the group to be in problem solving mode. Volunteer to talk outside the meeting if it is a topic relevant to the policy and the person has the potential to obstruct progress on the policy.
- **A person chats with a neighbor.** Side conversations are inevitable and are apt to be brief. If they become a problem, remind members that they agreed to no side conversations.
- **A person is quiet or doesn't participate.** Encourage everyone to share experiences, views and ideas. Ask questions in a way that enables everyone to be an expert representing their stake in the policy. Remind people that different points of view are important to help shape a policy that represents the stakeholders in this food bank.
- **Interest seems to wane.** Establishing and holding interest is essential. Put energy into your voice and sentiments and don't speak in a monotone. Have everyone stand and stretch to renew energy.

- **Discussion lags.** Ask questions in a way that highlights the importance of the groups input. “OK, lets suppose that we decide [XYZ] and we word this section of the policy like that...” or “What would be your positives and negatives in response to that way of doing it?” or “How likely do you think this policy would be carried out by the food bank staff?” Use real or hypothetical cases. Call for specific experiences, ideas or opinions from group members. Pursue an important line of inquiry with direct questions.

## Handling Meeting Conflict

Meetings involve interaction between people with different values, perspectives and communication styles. Conflict may occur from time to time. The impact of conflict on a group depends on what the conflict is about, how it is initiated and how it is managed.

When someone raises a seemingly negative point of view, he or she gives others to chance to express opposing views. Encourage discussion and acceptance of different viewpoints. This strategy often leads to compromise that benefits all. Uncontrolled conflict, however, can lead to hurt feelings, withdrawal and the destruction of the group dynamic.

Here are some things you can do to prevent unhelpful conflict:

- Acknowledge and comment on disagreements, respectfully and sensitively.
- Remind people of the meeting guideline to disagree with the idea but not to criticize the individual.
- Respond to disagreement with a spirit of inquiry. Ask for clarification or examples.
- Focus on commonalities. Point out the similarities between individual perspectives. Let the group know you want to build on those.
- Engage the group in brainstorming optional solutions to a problem so they are reminded that there is more than one way to address an issue.
- Use humor to reduce tension.
- Postpone decision-making if the group is deeply divided. Appoint a task force to work on a proposal for the group.

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from “Handling Difficult Meeting Situations” from NEWH, The Hospitality Network. Available at: <http://newh.org/wp-content/uploads/BoardResources/BoardMeetingResources/Handling-Difficult-Meeting-Situations.pdf>