Hunger in America: The Rise and Evolution of America’s Public/Private Hunger Response Network, A Philadelphia Case Study

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Abstract
Since their emergence in the 1980s, food banks across the country have transformed from small, independent, community-run operations into complex organizations that move millions of pounds of food. In its infancy, this type of hunger response was provided on an “emergency” basis; however, as “emergency food” increasingly became a fundamental part of people’s diets, charitable organizations partnered with large scale government programs, food industry corporations and millions of volunteers. As the system grew, it evolved from a network of church basements to substantial institutions that provide food choice as well as programs intended to address poverty (a root cause of hunger) more specifically. This thesis will explore the rise and evolution of food banks, how their development over the past 40 years has allowed them to better meet the needs of food insecure individuals in the United States and the limitations of their current efforts.

Keywords
“food insecurity, hunger, food banks, charitable food, SNAP, food stamps, welfare, government response, social enterprise”

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HUNGER IN AMERICA

The Rise and Evolution of America’s
Public/Private Hunger Response Network

A Philadelphia Case Study

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Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Honors Thesis 2016
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ABSTRACT

Since their emergence in the 1980s, food banks across the country have transformed from small, independent, community-run operations into complex organizations that move millions of pounds of food. In its infancy, this type of hunger response was provided on an “emergency” basis; however, as “emergency food" increasingly became a fundamental part of people’s diets, charitable organizations partnered with large scale government programs, food industry corporations and millions of volunteers. As the system grew, it evolved from a network of church basements to substantial institutions that provide food choice as well as programs intended to address poverty (a root cause of hunger) more specifically. This thesis will explore the rise and evolution of food banks, how their development over the past 40 years has allowed them to better meet the needs of food insecure individuals in the United States and the limitations of their current efforts.
PREFACE

This thesis on the development and evolution of food banks grew out of my interest and involvement in student efforts to address hunger. I first heard about students engaging with the issue when I read about University of California Los Angeles undergraduates who succeeded in raising awareness about hunger and motivated their classmates to make a difference within the domain of local food insecurity. After their food service provider rejected their proposal to allocate unused meals from student meal plans toward alleviating hunger in Los Angeles (L.A.), these students set up a table outside their dining hall and asked peers to ‘swipe’ for a meal, take it to go and drop it on a collection table. The meals were then driven to inner-city L.A. and distributed to homeless people on the streets. Undeniable student interest led to the formation of an official campus group, which has continued to have an impact in the L.A. community ever since.

The following semester, I took a class in which the professor challenged us to identify a national problem that manifests itself in West Philadelphia and propose a hypothetical solution. To inspire our thinking, we were taken on a bus tour of West Philadelphia, where I noticed the lack of access to healthy foods. I did more research to discover that the city of Philadelphia has one of the nation’s highest hunger rates, and began to consider what a swipe donation program would look like at the University of Pennsylvania. Given that one in four residents of West Philadelphia is food insecure, and given the University’s commitment and stated mission to interact productively with its larger community, another student and I reached out to the Penn administration to share our vision for an organization that provides Penn students the
opportunity to donate their pre-paid, excess meal swipes toward feeding the Philadelphia community. Thus, Swipe Out Hunger Penn (“Swipes”) was born.

In the pilot semester, Swipe Out Hunger engaged 20% of students on a meal plan, and enough meal swipes were collected to fund over 14,000 meals for food insecure residents of West Philadelphia. Meals are provided by Philabundance Food Network, the largest emergency food distributor in the Delaware Valley. Swipe Out Hunger has since capitalized on its campus presence to expand programming beyond meal swipe collection. We now additionally focus on educating and engaging the Penn community about hunger through a variety of events. For example, people who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funding (formerly known as food stamps) from the government are given an average daily food budget of $4. We created a challenge in which students can attempt to live on $4 of food for one day, then post their total consumption on social media and challenge another person. Through our various initiatives, Swipe Out Hunger Penn, as of Spring 2016, has provided funds for over 36,000 meals to be distributed in West Philadelphia.

Inspired by the passion of Penn students and the belief that food security is a fundamental human right, I decided to pursue the topic for my PPE and Civic Scholars senior thesis. Hunger is a pervasive issue deeply ingrained in the fabric of our society. The problem has led to the formation of tens of thousands of organizations seeking to address it. America’s massive quantity and scale of hunger response organizations sparked my decision to explore the expanded role of food banks in addressing hunger as well as how they have adapted (and still need to adapt) alongside the needs of the population they serve.
INTRODUCTION

In an environment where increasing numbers of food insecure individuals were turning to hunger safety net programs, Janet Poppendieck in, *Sweet Charity: Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement* (1988) and Joel Berg in, *All You Can Eat: How Hungry is America?* (2008) published sharp critiques of the emergency food system. Both authors argued that eroding commitment to government-sponsored programs, exacerbated by economic crises, have resulted in a huge growth of charitable emergency food organizations in the United States. In looking at the limitations of both government and charitable hunger responses at the turn of the 21st century, the authors concluded that charity is not a way to feed the nation; reforming and expanding federal safety nets is the best approach to eliminating hunger because government programs (like SNAP) stimulate the economy, provide consumer choice and are both systematic and scalable. In evaluating Poppendieck and Berg’s concerns alongside the evolution of private hunger response since the authors published their findings, I contend that hunger response has grown into a coordinated public/private effort that addresses many of Poppendieck and Berg’s concerns.

This thesis argues that our charitable anti-hunger system, which distributes federal commodity and surplus food (in addition to privately sourced food) to communities across the United States, is both necessary and worth studying. In making this argument, I confront the compelling criticisms of the “emergency food system” made by Poppendieck and Berg. These authors claim that growth of “charitable” hunger response has taken place at the expense of the government safety net expansion Poppendieck and Berg would like to see. Programs like SNAP and school
meals, they argue, represent a more efficient and dignified way of addressing food insecurity than the current over-reliance on charity. I argue here, however, that in recent decades, government and charitable responses to hunger have grown and evolved together in ways that address food insecurity more efficiently than either entity could independently. Facts and figures presented in this thesis illustrate how necessary each entity is to the other. For example, over half of Feeding America (the national umbrella organization of food banks and large provider of food to these operations) client households report that they are currently receiving SNAP benefits, and of those who are not, 72% may be eligible. Moreover, of those who do receive SNAP benefits, most report that the benefits do not last the entire month, causing recipients to turn to charitable food. In short, neither type of program is serving most food insecure individuals adequately, but they do so better together than either would alone. In order to determine the extent to which this co-evolution has successfully addressed Poppendieck and Berg’s critiques of America’s hunger response, it is important to first explore their analysis in detail.

**POPPENDIECK AND BERG’S CRITIQUES OF CHARITABLE FOOD**

In *Sweet Charity: Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement*, Janet Poppendieck established a now classic account of the development of emergency food networks in the United States. In this ethnographic study of men and women who founded and worked in food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens across the country, Poppendieck put forth important critiques of the “emergency food system” that have

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1 Nancy Weinfeld et al., *Hunger in America 2014* (Chicago: Feeding America, 2015), 16.
frequently been repeated by anti-hunger advocates in subsequent decades. Perhaps foremost amongst the critics/advocates is Joel Berg, Director of Hunger Free America (previously New York City’s Coalition Against Hunger) and a former Clinton administration official in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Berg echoed many of Poppendieck’s criticisms of the nation’s increasing reliance on its emergency food system in his 2008 study, *All You Can Eat: How Hungry is America?*, as well as in speeches, articles and the widely screened 2012 documentary, *A Place at the Table.*

Poppendieck and Berg argue that the increasing reliance on emergency food networks grew out of the unfortunate juxtaposition of two phenomena: Reagan’s cutbacks in many of the nation’s most critical “safety net programs” (food stamps, welfare and Medicaid, among others) and a severe recession. This combination suddenly made hunger visible and urgent in the early 1980s in a way it had not been since the Great Depression. As the population in need grew, growing numbers of unemployed and homeless sought help on from churches and charitable institutions. Religious leaders and community volunteers in religious and charitable institutions felt they could not stand by and watch people go hungry, so they started serving prepared meals and distributing bags of groceries. Over time, umbrella organizations were established to coordinate their efforts. Emergency food responses quickly developed into major operations feeding millions of people.

Poppendieck and Berg were deeply alarmed by the ways in which the emergency food system represented a departure from the New Deal commitment of government responding to inevitable economic downturns, not by making their
citizens stand in bread lines, but with federally funded safety net programs. In their critiques, the authors share two main claims: first that government could (and should) address hunger in the United States with efficient, effective programs; second that food banks and emergency food networks will inevitably fail to address this problem adequately. These claims are grounded in the notion that while hunger in America is a serious problem, it is also one of the most easily solvable social issues faced by our nation today. Hunger in America could be ended, according to these authors, if government made a significant investment in simplifying and expanding its anti-hunger programs.

ARGUMENT FOR A GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Poppendieck and Berg argue that food stamps (renamed SNAP in 2008) provide a more efficient and dignified means for food insecure individuals to obtain food within mainstream commercial food distribution systems than is provided by the charitable food system. Since 2004, food insecure individuals have received food stamp benefits on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card that functions like a debit card and can be used at local stores. In addition to reducing overhead costs, EBT cards support local economies. SNAP spending at local food stores creates a 1.73 spending multiplier for gross domestic product (GDP), according to Moody’s Analytics. In other words, because people spend their SNAP benefits almost immediately in ways that benefit grocery stores and their suppliers, this type of government spending creates 1.73 times its original value in the broader economy.

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According to Poppendieck and Berg, charity cannot address hunger nearly as efficiently as government can, despite the tens of thousands of organizations that have emerged to try to meet the need. Berg makes this argument in part based on how much more money the government invests in addressing hunger than do charities. Based on data from before the recession, Berg calculates:

“[In 2008 numbers], even if all the nation’s food charities somehow accomplished the task of doubling their food distribution, this feat would barely dent the nation’s hunger problem, merely reducing the number of food-insecure Americans by 2 million. In contrast, if the US government increased the size of the federal nutrition safety net by only 10%, 8.5 million Americans would no longer be food insecure. A mere 20% safety net increase would nearly cut hunger in the United States in half. And a 41% increase would entirely eliminate food insecurity in America.”

Looking at Berg’s calculation in 2015 numbers, government benefits amounted to $74 billion while the total value of Feeding America’s food distributions (not including overhead costs) was $4.6 billion. Thus, a 10% increase in government spending represents a $7.4 billion budget increase while doubling food distribution represents a $4.6 billion budget increase. The scale and efficiency of federal programs, Berg argues, makes government the only plausible solution to the problem of hunger.

Compounding his evidence of government program effectiveness, Berg makes many arguments about inefficiencies within the private/public partnerships that comprise America’s charitable food networks. First, much of the food distributed by hunger relief organizations is actually provided or paid for by government, either

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5 In 2015, 3.3 billion pounds of food was distributed by food banks. Applying Philabundance’s $1.38 average value per pound of food, estimated food spending (not including overhead) by food banks was $4.6 billion.
6 Ibid., 201.
directly or indirectly. Federal commodity and emergency food programs represent direct government provision, while commercial food donations have tax write offs that represent indirect government provision. These government contributions to charitable food agencies result in an additional layer of administration and coordination that adds cost for both government and non-profits. Second, charitable food networks parallel commercial food networks, resulting in unnecessary overhead costs. “When a national food manufacturer donates food to a national organization, which then ships it to a local food bank, which in turn trucks it to local food pantries, such logistics often include two or three sets of trucks and fuel costs, two or three sets of warehouses, and two or three sets of administrative and fundraising staff.”

The duplicative provision of logistics, food and money demonstrate the ways in which the charitable food system adds a redundant layer of costs to the system compared to if government addressed food insecurity directly through adequately funding SNAP benefits that allow individuals to shop themselves at stores of their choosing.

Exacerbating charitable distribution shortcomings, Poppendieck and Berg argue that food banks have distracted Americans from the real problem. At the political level, non-profit organizations allow government to shed responsibility for the poor by reassuring policymakers and voters that hunger is being addressed. This illusion is dangerous because if voters do not perceive hunger as a pressing issue, policymakers will not feel pressure to increase spending on safety net programs, inevitably allowing government to substitute charity for adequate public provision. Moreover, the

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7 Berg, All You Can Eat, 201.
growing role of food banks in society has been no match for food insecurity, further demonstrating that it is not the most efficient response to the problem.

Beyond making economic sense, Poppendieck and Berg argue that SNAP furthers the fundamental American ideal of consumer choice and prevents the fiscal segregation inherent in some charitable food programs. “Food stamps permitted their recipients to shop with the same convenience and almost the same degree of choice as their non-poor neighbors. In a society where the consumer role is of paramount importance, [food stamps] ‘mainstreamed’ participants.”\(^9\) Not only is this good for the morale of people utilizing food assistance, it also reduces transportation costs across the food industry by consolidating distribution.

In conclusion, from an efficiency and economic standpoint, federal policies work better than the more diffuse public/private sector ability to respond to food insecurity. As a result, Berg calls for eliminating private programs and combining the eight federal programs\(^10\) “into one larger, but more efficient, entity.”\(^11\) Having multiple government anti-hunger programs with different applications and qualification thresholds presents an inefficiency that could be solved by having a single threshold and application accessed through one administering agency for all federal programs. According to Poppendieck and Berg, only government has the size, scope, resources and legitimacy to actually solve the problem. While emergency food distribution may keep people from starving, it is insufficient in providing lasting food security. In

\(^9\) Poppendieck, *Sweet Charity*, 12.
\(^10\) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP); Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP); Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP); National School Lunch Program (NSLP); School Breakfast Program (SBP); Summer Food Service Program (SFSP); Women, Infants and Children (WIC). See appendix for further explanation of these programs.
assessing the post-recession dynamics of hunger in America along with the social, political and industry responses, *A Place at the Table* similarly concludes that, “charity is an important provider of emergency food assistance, but it is not a way to feed a nation.” In contrast to Poppendieck and Berg’s argument that government alone is the solution to hunger in America, I argue that government and charitable responses have both evolved and improved, and that both serve a necessary role in today’s coordinated hunger response.

**FROM “EMERGENCY FOOD” TO “COORDINATED HUNGER RESPONSE”**

Poppendieck and Berg’s sharp critique of the turn to charity as a means of addressing hunger and food insecurity in the richest nation on earth is undoubtedly compelling. Nonetheless, many of their arguments regarding the “7 –ins” of charitable hunger response – insufficiency, inappropriateness, nutritional inadequacy, instability, inaccessibility, inefficiency and indignity – are at this point outdated. They claim, for example, that one reason charitable food networks fail those who rely on them is because charitable organizations have become responsible for people’s diets, yet do not distribute nutritionally balanced food to their clients. While this may have been the case when Poppendieck wrote her critique in the 1980s, shortly after food banking first emerged, in today’s system, food banks are well aware that they are a central part of people’s diets and work hard to institutionalize healthy food in their programming. Greater Chicago Food Depository (GCFD), responsible for feeding over 800,000 people each month, emphasized this shift as a main aspect of food bank evolution over the past

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forty years. “We work really hard to get the appropriate donated products, and what isn’t donated we procure through purchasing our own food.”\textsuperscript{13} Both SHARE and Philabundance echo GCFD’s commitment. While a subsequent study is needed to evaluate the extent to which food banks across the country are successfully executing on their nutrition goals, promising evidence surrounding the implementation of the healthy food priority within Feeding America is presented in Chapter Two.

A second reason Berg and Poppendieck reject private programs as the solution for hunger is because they believe the system segregates the poor from the rest of the population. Traditional soup kitchens and pantries are a “retreat from the effort of mainstreaming and inclusion, however imperfect, represented by food stamps to programs that separate and segregate the poor.”\textsuperscript{14} Today, however, the types of charitable food programs have changed. Many food banks and food operations focus on distributing food in larger quantities, not one meal at a time. For example, in 2014, 67% of charitable food programs were grocery programs and 33% were meal programs.\textsuperscript{15} This shift enables food insecure individuals to have more food in their homes that they can prepare like their non-poor neighbors do and make fewer visits to hunger response organizations. Furthermore, whereas once food bank programs may have “deprive[d] recipients of the consumer choice that has become a hallmark of American life,”\textsuperscript{16} today clients are often given the choice of what food would best suit their needs. The basic premise of choice pantries is that clients are offered a level of

\textsuperscript{13} Interview with Amy Laboy (Director of Programs at Greater Chicago Food Depository), April 4, 2016.
\textsuperscript{14} Poppendieck, \textit{Sweet Charity}, 12.
\textsuperscript{15} Weinfeld et al., \textit{Hunger in America 2014}, 50.
\textsuperscript{16} Poppendieck, \textit{Sweet Charity}, 14.
choice in the products they receive. Some of these operations resemble small grocery stores from which clients can fill a bag.\textsuperscript{17} Other of these food operations prepare boxes with various options to serve families utilizing the program. Clients then choose which box best suits their needs. Month to month, contents of boxes may change to reflect what individuals have requested. Such programs are examples of how charitable food agencies have become more responsive to client needs over time. In choice models, the needs and preferences of recipients are taken into account, resulting in a more dignified system.

Finally, Berg and Poppendieck have criticized the fact that food banks do not work to change the underlying problems causing food insecurity. Instead, charitable food operations relieve pressure from more fundamental solutions. Culturally, it creates “the illusion of effective action and offer[s] us myriad ways of participating in it. It creates a culture of charity that normalizes destitution and legitimates personal generosity as a response to major social and economic dislocation.”\textsuperscript{18} In speaking with the executive directors at SHARE Food Program, Philabundance and Greater Chicago Food Depository, as well as a representative from Feeding America, it is clear that food banks are stepping up their advocacy efforts in favor of increased funding for federal hunger safety nets, expansion of anti-hunger programs, and to a minor extent underlying economic issues related to poverty. An agenda that strengthens and expands programs like SNAP and increases food donations could go a long way in addressing hunger.

\textsuperscript{17} “Client Choice Food Pantries,” \textit{End Hunger in America}.
\textsuperscript{18} Poppendieck, \textit{Sweet Charity}, 5.
Advocates like Poppendieck and Berg have also expressed concerns that anti-hunger organizations’ dependence on large corporations lead them to ignore issues such as minimum wage and expanded employer-provided healthcare that could reduce poverty, and thus food insecurity, because they go against the financial interests of corporations that sustain food banks. Poppendieck and Berg’s critique in this realm holds true today. Although large hunger relief organizations dedicate significant staff hours to advocacy, efforts are concentrated around fighting to maintain or expand government nutrition programs, rather than issues that impact poverty. However, the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), affiliated with Feeding America, supplements the work of hunger response organizations, specifically in the anti-poverty domain. Their mission to “improve public policies and public-private partnerships to eradicate hunger and undernutrition in the United States” includes a specific focus on addressing hunger at its root cause: poverty. With this combination, it is evident that the advocacy efforts of food banks and their partner organizations have come a long way since conception, and also that there is room to continue growing and evolving in the future.

In short, charitable food networks are, to some extent, addressing Poppendieck and Berg’s concern that food banks are not politically engaged. Although most of their advocacy is with regard to government programs that directly impact the work of food banks and their clients, hunger relief agencies today do have a political voice within local, state and federal governments. Nationally, advocates work on issues such as

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19 Interview with William Clark (Former Executive Director of Philabundance), March 15, 2016.
20 “About FRAC.” Food Research and Action Center.
improving school meals and SNAP funding. At the state level, organizations fight for expanded government programs, food allocation to high-need areas and a livable minimum wage. Locally, organizations strive to engage community members and local officials in the response. Large operations today recognize that “to truly end hunger is not only about access to food: it’s also about being part of a coalition that addresses needs from healthcare to workforce development [through partnership, education and advocacy].”\textsuperscript{21} Advocacy targeting poverty-related legislation is less developed than the more prevalent food program advocacy. There are, however, individuals within the anti-hunger industry who are committed to implementing a broader anti-hunger and anti-poverty. William Clark, who served as the executive director of Philabundance for 14 years, urges that in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, “the small mission [of food banks] is to get food to people who are hungry. The larger mission is to end hunger, which becomes a social issue and requires a quasi-political movement.”\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{UPDATING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF FOOD BANKS IN TODAY’S LANDSCAPE}

Like Poppendieck and Berg, I struggle because hunger response is a double edged sword. Increasing the efficiency of anti-hunger organizations will make society less likely to recognize hunger and its root causes as a problem, and slow demands for government mobilization toward employment, wage and safety net policies that can prevent food insecurity. If members of a community do not see hunger, they are unlikely to mobilize around hunger prevention. The better grassroots organizations become at feeding food insecure members of the community, the less voters and

\textsuperscript{21} Interview with Amy Laboy.
\textsuperscript{22} Interview with William Clark.
policymakers will see preventing hunger as an urgent issue for government to address. At the same time, however, there is no evidence that reducing food banking would lead to increased support for anti-hunger government programs. In fact, decades of evidence demonstrate that public/private hunger relief programs can exist and progress symbiotically with the government programs Poppendieck and Berg prefer.

Since Poppendieck and Berg wrote their critiques, we have seen a dramatic expansion in SNAP participation as well as food bank budgets and offerings. As both government and charitable food programs have grown, food insecure individuals have become increasingly dependent on both types of programs. Food banks have responded to this dependency by adapting in directions that respond to many of Poppendieck and Berg's critiques, including increasing the nutritional value of food offered, developing programs that limit segregation of low-income populations and engaging in political advocacy.

While improving federal programs is critically important, food banks will remain a fundamental part of hunger response for years to come. Today's political climate is not conducive to expanding food stamp benefits, unemployment benefits, disability and housing benefits, guaranteed universal healthcare or raising the minimum wage. President-Elect Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election reinforces a clear popular sentiment against increasing social spending. Although neither candidate specifically took a stance on hunger in the debates, Trump’s proposed plan will address poverty by creating incentives for people to work, implying (and almost specifically stating) that individuals must be employed to obtain SNAP, welfare and other assistance – never mind that in many cases wages and
available work hours, combined with these federal benefits, is still insufficient. Thus, improving the existing hunger response network to work as efficiently as possible will be vital in the coming years.

This thesis represents a preliminary step towards giving food bank evolution the further study it deserves, focusing particularly on the national development of food banks followed by a case study of Philadelphia’s hunger response. Chapter One explores the dynamics of hunger in America and the various programs that work to address it; Chapter Two examines how food banks developed and evolved to meet needs unmet by government programs alone; and Chapter Three looks specifically at the state of hunger and hunger response in Philadelphia, particularly the different approaches to hunger relief taken by its two large food banks. An in-depth look at these organizations’ operations, philosophies and impact helps to highlight the range of issues faced by the nation’s food banks and the range in their approaches to addressing them.
CHAPTER 1: HUNGER IN AMERICA

Understanding the development of anti-hunger programs requires first understanding the definition of food insecurity and how it is measured. A basic measure of United States food insecurity is necessary to grasp the extent to which food insecurity exists and develop strategies that address it. After laying out the definition and measures of food insecurity, this chapter discusses various government programs that address food insecurity, including SNAP, WIC, school meals, emergency food and commodity programs. Chapter One clearly points to the fact that despite increased access to SNAP benefits, individuals in the United States continue to rely heavily on the charitable food system.

HOW GOVERNMENT DEFINES HUNGER

The USDA defines food insecurity as lack of access to sufficient food for an active healthy life, usually caused by inadequate funds.23 There are different severities of food insecurity, ranging from marginal food security (anxiety over food sufficiency with little or no indication of diet or food intake changes) to very low food security (incidences of disrupted or reduced food intake).24 The United States government has implemented multiple programs to address food insecurity, most notably SNAP.25

SNAP is widely regarded as the nation’s “first defense against hunger.”26 When President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the original Food Stamp Act in 1964, he described

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24 Ibid.
25 SNAP is discussed in detail on page 29.
26 Jessica Shahin, “The Many Reasons USDA is Celebrating 50 Years of SNAP.” USDA.
the program as one of the most valuable weapons in the war against poverty. “[It] gives financially strapped households more purchasing power so they can buy enough food to eat balanced meals throughout the month.”

Despite Johnson’s high praise, the program initially was quite limited. Eligible clients had to purchase stamps that could be used to obtain designated food items from retailers. In 1965, the Food Stamp Act appropriated $100 million to 560,000 individuals. Over the years, reformers fought to expand food stamps into an entitlement program whereby eligible clients receive funds that can be used in stores via an EBT card. By 2015, SNAP funding grew to nearly 1,000 times the 1965 level and served 75 times more people.

## MEASURING FOOD INSECURITY

Government determines food insecurity using specific census questions in the Current Population Survey (CPS). This data allows government and anti-hunger organizations to track food insecurity trends and extent both nationally and locally. Survey information influences how funds are distributed and where further programming is necessary. Three key questions in determining food insecurity are:

1. I worried that food would run out before I would have money to buy more;
2. The food I bought didn’t last, and I didn’t have money to get more;
3. I couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.

If the answer to one or more of the above questions is sometimes or often true, further questions are asked regarding reducing meal size, not eating when hungry and relying on low cost or unhealthy foods.

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27 Food Research and Action Center, “Hunger in America, 2013,” in A Place at the Table, 15.
28 “A Short History of SNAP,” USDA Food and Nutrition Service.
30 Ibid.
In addition to government efforts to statistically measure national and local food insecurity through census data, Feeding America has attempted to measure the monetary gap between food insecurity levels and complete food security using census data, food budget shortfall and average meal costs for people living in poverty in different areas of the country. Feeding America established the “Meal Gap” in 2011 to quantify United States food need in a single number. The Meal Gap is calculated by summing annual food budget deficits in a specified area and dividing by the average cost per meal for a person experiencing poverty in that area. Food Budget Shortfall is calculated using the following CPS question (posed to individuals determined to be food insecure by the above questions): “To buy just enough food to meet your needs, would you need to spend more than you do now, or could you spend less?” Those who respond, “more,” are asked how much more money is needed each week. Aggregate budget shortfall is divided by the number of people in food insecure households to arrive at an average weekly budget shortfall per person. In 2015, aggregate budget shortfall across the country amounted to $24.2 billion. Per person, the average shortfall was $16.28 per week. When this per person budget shortfall is divided by meal cost in a given area, the result is how many more meals are needed to adequately feed American households – i.e. the Meal Gap in individual communities, states and the country as a whole.

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
While the Meal Gap makes hunger more tangible, the measurement fails to address an important distinction. Phrasing of budget shortfall questions leaves it ambiguous whether shortfalls are calculated before or after charitable food is accessed (if it is accessed). Assuming some individuals include charitable food in their shortfall calculations and some do not, a question remains: to what extent are food pantries and soup kitchens satisfying the needs of food insecure individuals? This is a question I originally sought to answer in this thesis; however, as I learned more about the complex grassroots nature of hunger response, I have been forced to accept that such questions are nearly impossible to assess analytically, though municipalities across the country are working toward an estimate. Despite the ambiguities in Meal Gap numbers, my hope is that anti-hunger organizations and community leaders will become more adept at using Meal Gap estimates to assess how well organizations are meeting the needs of the communities in which they operate. Once this analysis is available, government and non-profit organizations will be able to adapt programs to better serve individuals within their geographic reach.

**FOOD BANK CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

Demographics of Feeding America clients have changed since scholars first began examining hunger response, requiring hunger response to shift alongside them. Before the 2008 recession, most food bank clients were individuals who constantly struggled with hunger. “In [the] uncertain economic environment [since 2008], the landscape of hunger changed rapidly.”36 Hunger expanded to penetrate all types of

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36 Matt Knott, “Feeding America in Times of Change,” in A Place at the Table, 140.
communities. Of the 315 United States counties with the highest food insecurity rates, 22.2% are classified as urban, 24.1% as suburban and 53.7% as rural. \(^{37}\) “There are [also] a number of counties that don’t have the highest food-insecurity rates, but in terms of population, represent [the largest number food insecure people],” proving that costs of living are rising faster than wages. \(^{38}\)

Although the economy has largely recovered since the Great Recession, a lasting impact has been felt in the form of a smaller middle class and a larger proportion of people who are living on wages near the poverty line, unable to pay their bills while still providing an adequate and nutritional diet for themselves and their families. In fact, over half of SNAP recipients who are able to work do, and more than 80% worked in the year before or after receiving benefits. \(^{39}\) The rate of working recipients is even higher in households with children. \(^{40}\) However, full-time employment, classified as over 30 hours per week, only accounts for 43% of those client households, while part-time employment, classified as 30 hours or less per week, accounts for 57%. \(^{41}\) Often times, these individuals are trapped in jobs with few benefits, little chance of advancement and undesirable hours. “Compared to other wealthy nations, the United States has the highest proportion of workers in low-wage jobs, defined as those where employees earn less than two-thirds of the median wage.” \(^{42}\) This trend is predicted to continue. Since the recession, low wage jobs have grown by 2.3 million while medium

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 14.
\(^{39}\) “Policy Basics: Introduction to SNAP,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
\(^{40}\) Mary Babic et al., “From Paycheck to Pantry: Hunger in Working America,” 4.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., 7.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., 8.
and high wage jobs have contracted by 1.2 million.\textsuperscript{43} To exacerbate the problem, the U.S. Department of Labor projects that nearly half of the 15 million jobs created in the United States between 2012 and 2022 will be low-wage occupations.\textsuperscript{44} As low-wage occupations increase, so too will the number of people who rely on food pantries as a consistent part of their nutritional intake.

**ECONOMIC CAUSES OF FOOD INSECURITY**

Another challenge for building robust food security programs and the ability to measure their effectiveness is the interconnectedness of hunger with the economy, unemployment, underemployment and low wages. Changing economic conditions greatly impact the demographics and rates of food insecure people. Devising adequate anti-hunger programs requires taking note of these important factors.

**UNEMPLOYMENT**

Most recent poverty numbers, which fluctuate alongside unemployment and the economy, have fallen from 14.1% in 2014 to 12.7% in 2015; in the same period, unemployment decreased from 5.6% to 5.0%.\textsuperscript{45} \textsuperscript{46} The following graph shows the relationship between unemployment and food insecurity rates from 2007, before the Great Recession, to the Great Recession’s peak in 2011, to 2015 when, despite economic recovery, food insecurity levels remained high. In these years, the number of

\textsuperscript{43} Mary Babic et al., “From Paycheck to Pantry,” 8.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} “Food Security in the U.S.” USDA Economic Research Service
food insecure people went from 36 million,\textsuperscript{47} up to 50.1 million, then down slightly to 42.2 million people, respectively.\textsuperscript{48}

\[ \text{Food Insecurity Rates} \]

\[ \text{Unemployment Rates} \]

\textbf{UNDEREMPLOYMENT}

Similarly, underemployment contributes to the problem and occurs when a person is in the labor force but not obtaining enough hours or wages to make ends meet. Underemployment includes low-wage and part-time workers (who typically do not receive benefits), as well as people working in jobs below their skillset. Many of these individuals would be working more if given the opportunity. Underemployment and low wages may explain why food insecurity remains high while unemployment rates have decreased. The following graph is consistent with this explanation. High

\textsuperscript{47} Feeding America, “2011 Annual Report: Partnering for a Hunger Free America,” 2.
\textsuperscript{49} “Labor Force Statistics,” United States Department of Labor.
levels of food insecurity despite increasing SNAP and Feeding America participation indicate that there is a larger lower class earning inadequate wages.

This trend likely will increase in coming years as technology and machines replace workers and an alternate skill set is required for higher-wage jobs, particular programming and engineering. Evolving food bank client demographics are consistent with this trend. Food banks are serving increasing numbers of working poor, further demonstrating that underemployment and low wages (in addition to unemployment) are important causes of food insecurity in America.

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50 Feeding America clients from respective annual reports; total food insecure from USDA ERS: Household Food Security in the United States 2015; SNAP participation from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.
INCREASING COSTS OF LIVING

While unemployment and underemployment are main factors in food insecurity rates, they do not capture the whole story. Rising costs of basic necessities play an important role by making poverty thresholds for federal safety net programs increasingly inadequate. When rising costs of living are taken into consideration, “the tens of billions spent on federal nutrition assistance programs doesn’t even come close to making up for the hundreds of billions of dollars lost in food purchasing power.” 51

In part, high food insecurity rates exist because federal assistance thresholds, set in 1963, were based on research indicating the average family spends one third of its income on food. 52 The poverty level was then set by multiplying a minimal food budget by three, and adjusting it annually for inflation. 53 Besides inflation adjustments, the formula has been unchanged in the past 50 years despite that spending patterns are not the same as they were in 1963. 54 Studies show that the official poverty line is no longer an accurate depiction of livable income, particularly in metropolitan areas. “National data reveals that 55% of people struggling with hunger have incomes above the federal poverty level.” 55 To help account for this disparity, the SNAP qualification threshold is set at 130% of the poverty line. 56 Despite this adjustment, many individuals ineligible for SNAP benefits experience food insecurity. While other federal programs have thresholds above 130% of the poverty line, charitable organizations are

51 Berg, All You Can Eat, 85.
52 Craig Gunersen et al., “Map the Meal Gap 2015,” 15.
54 Ibid.
56 Ibid., 15.
necessary to supplement government programs and reach food insecure individuals whose income is greater than 130% of the poverty line, but still not a livable wage.

**SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)**

The largest federal program addressing food insecurity is SNAP, which provides nutrition assistance to low-income individuals and families. SNAP is an entitlement program, which means any qualifying individual or household can receive benefits. While the primary goal is to help low-income individuals afford an adequate diet, the “counter-cyclical” program also benefits the economy in periods of recession and high unemployment by putting money in the hands of people who will spend it.

Unfortunately, a contributing factor to America’s hunger crisis is the difficulty families face in applying and qualifying for SNAP. In FY2015, 45,767,000 people (1 in every 6 Americans) utilized SNAP at an average monthly benefit of $126.83.\(^57\) Despite high enrollment, an estimated 27% of the 48 million food insecure people in the United States had household incomes that exceeded the eligibility threshold.\(^58\) Charitable hunger response is especially important for these 13 million individuals, who, due to stringent guidelines, are excluded from receiving the benefits they need. To be eligible for SNAP benefits, households can only have $2,250 in countable resources (bank accounts).\(^59\)\(^60\) The program is administered independently by states, and states have autonomy over restrictions such as the inclusion of vehicles in asset calculation. Beyond the asset test, households must meet both gross and net monthly income

\(^{57}\) “SNAP Participation and Costs.” *USDA Food and Nutrition Service.*

\(^{58}\) Weinfeld et al., *Hunger in America 2014*, 1.

\(^{59}\) “SNAP Participation and Costs.” *USDA Food and Nutrition Service.*

\(^{60}\) Can have slightly more if a member of the household is over age 60.
When considering cost of living and the financial burden of even common illnesses – let alone more severe medical conditions, utilities, etc. – the eligibility threshold is unreasonably low, excluding many individuals who are, in fact, food insecure. And while the ineligibility threshold is already unrealistically low, when adding the rising cost of college education, necessary to secure jobs that enable individuals to break the cycle of poverty, families who are barely scraping by yet trying to prepare for the future are further penalized. The following table shows wage levels for SNAP eligibility, effective October 1, 2016 through September 30, 2017:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Size</th>
<th>Gross Monthly Income (130 Percent of Poverty Line)</th>
<th>Net Monthly Income (100 Percent of Poverty Line)</th>
<th>Maximum Monthly Allotment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$1,287</td>
<td>$990</td>
<td>$194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$1,736</td>
<td>$1,335</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$2,184</td>
<td>$1,860</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$2,633</td>
<td>$2,025</td>
<td>649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$3,081</td>
<td>$2,370</td>
<td>771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$3,530</td>
<td>$2,715</td>
<td>925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maximum allotments for eligible households are calculated by multiplying net monthly income by .3 and subtracting the amount from the maximum allotment for a given household size. The .3 multiple was chosen because government expects SNAP households to spend 30% of their resources on food. Maximum allotments are shown in the above table.

As one can imagine from seeing the allotment, SNAP benefits alone are not sufficient to address hunger in our country. Wages are stagnant. Food, health, housing

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61 “SNAP Participation and Costs.” *USDA Food and Nutrition Service.*
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
and transportation costs soar."\(^{64}\) Meanwhile, income and asset eligibility thresholds for SNAP funding, which were too low (and thus restrictive) to begin with, have not increased proportionally with living costs. Compounding the problem, 21.1% of people who do receive food benefits reported that these benefits last one week or less, 31.3% reported that benefits last two weeks, and 33.9% reported that benefits last for three weeks.\(^{65}\) Only a small minority reported that their SNAP benefits are sufficient to maintain food security for the entire month. To get enough food, many people reported getting food from pantries and soup kitchens, eating food past its expiration date, purchasing food in damaged packages, purchasing inexpensive and unhealthy food, receiving help from family or friends and watering down food or drink.\(^{66}\) As is evident by these statistics, the SNAP program does not sufficiently address food insecurity in our country. These funding insufficiencies contribute to the fact that in 2014, approximately 48 million Americans were food insecure.\(^{67}\)

Beyond funding insufficiencies for enrolled clients, 15% of individuals who do qualify are not enrolled.\(^{68}\) In many cases, the decision to not apply is economically rational. A successful application involves multiple trips to a government office during business hours. When transportation costs, forgone income from missing work and childcare are considered, completing the application may not be economically feasible. Thus, food insecure people who are either ineligible for SNAP or unable to meet all the

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\(^{64}\) Berg, *All You Can Eat*, 85.
\(^{65}\) Weinfeld et al., *Hunger in America 2014*, 141.
\(^{66}\) Ibid., 150.
\(^{67}\) Craig Gunersen et al., “Map the Meal Gap 2015,” 5.
\(^{68}\) “SNAP/Food Stamp Participation Data.” *Food Research Access Center.*
requirements for enrollment find pantries to be a critical resource, demonstrating that charitable hunger response is a vital institution in America today.

**A CRITICAL INTERSECTION: GOVERNMENT & CHARITABLE FOOD PROGRAMS**

In addition to SNAP, there are other critically important government hunger safety nets. Programs include Women Infants and Children (WIC), National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). These programs multiply the poverty line by 185% to define their qualification threshold. Applying these rules to a family of four, annual household income would have to be less than $44,955 to qualify for NSLP, SBP and WIC. The following table breaks down income eligibility for various government programs. Specifically, it shows that only 57% of food insecure individuals are eligible for SNAP benefits, 17% of food insecure individuals have incomes that qualify for child nutrition and WIC programs and 26% of individuals rely on charitable programs alone to meet their food needs.

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70 Ibid., 37.
71 Ibid., 16.
72 Ibid.
In short, Feeding America’s large infrastructure has been crucial in satisfying needs unmet by government programs, both because benefits are inadequate to meet the need and because income restrictions make many food insecure individuals ineligible for government programs. Feeding America has created a large infrastructure in its effort to satisfy food needs unmet by government programs. Much of the food distributed to food insecure individuals by pantries and soup kitchens across the country comes from Feeding America, which currently serves 46.5 million unique individuals each year with over 3.3 billion pounds of food and grocery products.\textsuperscript{73} \textsuperscript{74} Fifty-five percent of Feeding America’s client households receive monthly SNAP benefits, and of the 45% who do not, 72% are income eligible.\textsuperscript{75} Moreover, 63% of households plan on charitable food as part of their monthly household budget.\textsuperscript{76} These facts demonstrate that charitable food organizations are necessary in conjunction with government programming.

Perhaps in recognition of the dual necessity, in addition to federal programs that provide nutrition assistance directly to households, two other federal programs play a large role in hunger response by providing food for local agencies to distribute. The first of these programs is The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). “TEFAP is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing them emergency food assistance at no cost.”\textsuperscript{77} In this program, the USDA purchases nutritious food, based on agricultural market conditions, and makes it

\textsuperscript{73} Weinfeld et al., *Hunger in America 2014*, 7.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 131.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} “The Emergency Food Assistance Program.” *Food and Nutrition Service*. 
available to State Distributing Agencies. These agencies then distribute the food to local organizations (primarily food banks) to disseminate among those in need. There are two strands of TEFAP food: entitlement and bonus. Entitlement food is guaranteed to states/organizations and comes with administrative funds worth $0.14 per pound toward distribution. Bonus food comes with no administrative funds: it is simply meant to support agricultural markets and reduce federal food inventories, while at the same time assisting low income people.

The second federal program, also intertwined with charitable response, is the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). Like TEFAP, CSFP “mutually promotes agriculture policy and alleviates hunger through the use of food commodities acquired under government farm supports.” Under this program, government commodities are given to state governments for distribution to anti-hunger agencies. These agencies then package the shelf-safe commodity food into 30-pound boxes, primarily for qualifying seniors. Local organizations are responsible for determining applicant eligibility for these programs as well as carrying out distribution.

As is evident, food banks are necessary to supplement government benefits for people with incomes below 185% of the poverty line as well as for food insecure individuals who do not qualify for benefits. Other important intersections between government hunger response and charitable hunger response are in supporting children who receive school meals during the school year but who may experience high levels of food insecurity over breaks and in carrying out TEFAP and CSFP distribution.

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79 Ibid.
Therefore, food banks will remain a critical institution in hunger response, making the continued development and improvement of this public/private partnership a priority.

**THE TAKEAWAY ABOUT HUNGER IN AMERICA**

For many of the approximately 48 million Americans facing food insecurity, the public/private network of hunger response programs serves to ease anxiety regarding food access. As this network evolves and becomes increasingly complex, information surrounding how well the system meets America’s food need under different economic conditions will serve as a guide for future innovation. While federal nutrition programs currently represent 95% of all food assistance in the United States, charitable distribution of government, purchased and recovered food is vital in addressing hunger in our society.\(^80\)

\(^{80}\) Philabundance Advocacy Advisory Council Meeting Materials.
CHAPTER 2: EMERGENCE OF FOOD BANKS

“This whole industry was not thought to be a long term solution. It was built to be a short-term turnaround quick-fix. No one anticipated it would be an ongoing and necessary area of support.”

-Amy Laboy, Greater Chicago Food Depository

A food bank is a not-for-profit organization that collects food to store and later distribute to a network of grassroots organizations (shelters, pantries, kitchens, etc.) working on the front lines to feed food insecure individuals in the communities in which they operate. Although the visible aspects of food banks are community canned food drives, the majority of their food comes from government commodity programs, procurement grants and food companies that have excess food which would otherwise be thrown away. In exchange for their donation, in addition to avoiding waste costs, these businesses receive a tax benefit from the government. This chapter examines the transformation of food banking from a single operation out of Arizona to a national network feeding millions of people and distributing billions of pounds of food.

HISTORY OF FOOD BANKS

Feeding America is the nation’s largest not-for-profit hunger relief organization, comprised of 200 food banks and over 63,000 member agencies that receive and distribute food from food banks and work alongside food banks to address hunger through emergency food assistance and programing.81 Today, Feeding America is

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81 “History of Food Banking.” Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina.
responsible for delivering 3.3 billion pounds of food annually, an amount nearly 11,000 times greater than in 1965 when the first food bank was created in Phoenix, Arizona.82

The movement began when John van Hengel, a soup kitchen volunteer, began soliciting donations from grocery stores and local farms. He received products that were edible, but either damaged or approaching their expiration date. Before long, his efforts spawned more food than a single soup kitchen could handle. Thus, van Hengel set up a warehouse to store donated food that would eventually be distributed to charities throughout Phoenix. In 1975, the federal government recognized the merits of van Hengel’s organization and provided him a grant to help start similar operations throughout the nation. By 1977, food banks had been established in 18 cities.83 The movement was facilitated by the 1976 Tax Reform Act, which provided a financial incentive to companies that donate to food banks. In 1979, van Hengel established Second Harvest, which later changed its name to ‘Feeding America’ to better reflect the organization’s mission.84

**EVOLUTION OF FOOD BANKS**

As food banking has grown in scale, so too has it grown in complexity. In addition to coordinating the collection and distribution of 3.3 billion pounds of food, Feeding America’s role has shifted from a temporary emergency response to a central food source for families in need. As such, food banks have assumed responsibility for providing nutritious, perishable foods to individuals and families who rely on that food

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82 “Feeding More People with the Help of Mobile Technology.” *SAP Customer Snapshot: Feeding America.*
83 “Our History.” *Feeding America.*
84 Ibid.
– a task that requires refrigeration throughout the entire process, from transport, to storage, to the final delivery location. Not only is refrigerated equipment expensive, but food banks also must be more efficient in food collection and distribution so that food doesn’t spoil before it is passed to clients. A 2012 New York Times article, *Food Banks Expand Beyond Hunger*, notes that millions of people now utilize food banks as a “chronic coping strategy.” As such, they have “increasingly moved beyond providing short-term [aid]... to confronting chronic hunger and poor nutrition.”\(^\text{85}\) In addressing challenges regarding the nutrition of food aid, large organizations have established nutritionally balanced initiatives that feed students outside school hours, deliver food to seniors and truck produce to food deserts. Many organizations also have programs to help register food insecure individuals and families for federal assistance.

Operational methods of food banks have changed due to their expanding and evolving role. In the early 1980s, whichever member could pick up available food in a timely fashion got the donation. By the late 1980s, America’s Second Harvest allocated allotments to member food banks based on poverty and population. However, these allocations did not differentiate based on food type. Whether it was chicken or potato chips, the quantity offered counted toward a member’s allotment. Even if members declined food due to high freight cost (members were responsible for shipping), the offer was still considered an allocation, “and that member dropped to the bottom of the list immediately.”\(^\text{87}\) This system, which took choice away from member agencies working in and for communities, made it inherently more difficult for food banks to


\(^{86}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{87}\) Patricia Houlihan, “How Food Banks Came to Love the Free Market,” *University of Chicago GSB Magazine*. 
effectively serve their clients. Instead of using firsthand knowledge of their community to pick food that would best serve the community's needs depending on what is already available locally (e.g. a Florida food bank would not want to receive a truckload of citrus from Feeding America), food banks relied on the umbrella organization to make allotments. This decreased the amount of food Feeding America was able to distribute, in addition to requiring food banks to spend more time sourcing alternate donations.

In 2005, 30 years after its conception, Feeding America adopted a “choice method” of food allocation for its member food banks that allows food banks to compete for the products they want via online, non-cash bidding. In this system, food banks in the Feeding America network are allotted a certain number of “shares” each morning based on poverty and population. Banks can either use or save their shares to bid on food posted twice daily. If a food bank spends its shares to purchase food, the next day those shares are redistributed amongst all member food banks according to a set formula. This process keeps a constant number of points in the system that member food banks can use to bid on food sourced by Feeding America. To ensure small food banks are able to compete with large food banks, they (1) get larger lines of credit, (2) can band together with other small food banks to bid as a group and share a truckload, and (3) can ask Feeding America to handle their bidding if there is not someone who can be devoted to it. While food banks lose more often than they win, operators are more satisfied with this system, created by University of Chicago Graduate School of Business faculty. John Arnold of Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank in Michigan shared that, “deciding which products to bid on isn’t easy, but we know our service area better than anyone else, and we know what kind of niche each product might
serve.” Another benefit of the newer system is that it allows food banks to share their surplus (i.e. potatoes in Idaho) with other food banks around the country. Food banks can put excess items on the auction block, and upon “sale,” the selling organization gets 90% of the shares used to purchase the food, with 10% going back to Feeding America to be redistributed amongst all member food banks the following morning. However, many organizations instead offer their excess food to neighboring food banks, free of cost. Regardless of whether excess food is formally placed on the market, the choice system has substantially increased the efficiency of Feeding America’s business operations.

**EVIDENCE OF SHIFTING PRIORITIES**

In recent years, Feeding America has demonstrated an increased commitment to distributing healthy and fresh foods, made possible by improved technology, enhanced sourcing capabilities and refrigerated equipment. Technology allows local produce donors to connect with food banks in real time and route trucks to maximize efficiency; therefore, perishable produce can be recovered and distributed before it spoils. Sourcing capabilities have been enhanced by developing more and stronger relationships with retailers, manufacturers and growers as well as having more staff dedicated to sourcing. Lastly, Feeding America allocates more funds to ensuring that food banks have refrigerated trucks to transport produce and pantries and kitchens have refrigerators to store produce. In 2010 and 2011 alone, Feeding America

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88 Houlihan, “How Food Banks Came to Love the Free Market.”
provided 112 and 113 refrigerated vehicles, respectively, to member food banks.\textsuperscript{90}

Feeding America provides millions of dollars in grants each year to maintain the 2,700 truck fleet and fund proper equipment for the local network of 61,000 charitable agencies.\textsuperscript{91, 92} These advances allow food banks to distribute a larger volume of fresh produce. In 2009, fresh produce represented 5.7\% of food sourced and distributed by Feeding America.\textsuperscript{93} Just six years later in 2015, fresh produce represented 25\% of food sourced and distributed by Feeding America.\textsuperscript{94} The following graph shows growth in fresh produce as a proportion of total food distributed by Feeding America:

![Graph showing growth in fresh produce as a proportion of total food distributed by Feeding America.](image)

Increasing commitment to distributing nutritious food also is reflected in the proportion of “Food to Encourage” Feeding America distributes. “Food to Encourage” is defined as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy and lean protein, which help clients maintain a nutritious diet and healthy lifestyle.\textsuperscript{96} In 2015, 68\% of

\textsuperscript{90} Feeding America, “2011 Annual Report,” 42.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{92} Feeding America, “2015 Annual Report,” 1.
\textsuperscript{93} Feeding America, “2009 Annual Report,” 2.
\textsuperscript{94} Feeding America, “2015 Annual Report,” 5, 6.
\textsuperscript{96} Feeding America, “2015 Annual Report,” 5.
food distributed by Feeding America was classified as nutritious – i.e. Food to Encourage. This amount, while increasing, still fluctuates based on donations and food recovery. In some years, food retailers may have large surpluses of “nutritious” foods, and in other years, surplus levels may either be generally lower or contain a less healthy food mix. Despite dependency on donations and recovered food, Feeding America’s tracking of the proportion of healthy food distributed demonstrates their awareness and commitment to improve. The graph below shows the growth in pounds of food distributed alongside the percent of nutritious food:

As a part of its commitment to obtaining appropriate products, Feeding America also has begun purchasing food. Procurement expenses first appeared on financial statements in 2010 and have increased steadily. Through secondary markets, farm surpluses and auctions, Feeding America is able to source and purchase food items in

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97 Feeding America Annual Reports from each respective year.
bulk at reasonable prices, making food purchases an efficient and effective way to get the right food to communities. Glenn Bergman, Executive Director of Philabundance, reinforced this point, sharing that monetary donations are the ideal form of donation. For example, with a monetary donation, Philabundance has access to food auctions in which they can purchase potatoes for $0.06 per pound.98 Because Philabundance makes the purchase directly, it comes in one truck and does not require volunteers to sort. This efficiency decreases both administrative costs and the time it takes for food to leave the warehouse. The following graph shows the proportion and number of meals Feeding America provided through their various procurement channels:

![Graph showing the proportion and number of meals provided by different channels.](image)

In conclusion, food banks have evolved to meet the changing needs of their clients. In addition to becoming more efficient, food banks today place a larger emphasis on distributing healthy foods that can be picked up and prepared in the home, a more accommodating model for working individuals.

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98 Interview with Glenn Bergman.
99 Feeding America Annual Reports from each respective year.
CHAPTER 3: PHILADELPHIA

“There’s no way in hell you can meet the need in this community.”
-Steveanna Wynn, SHARE Food Program

America’s hunger epidemic is especially prevalent in Philadelphia, the poorest among America’s ten largest cities.\(^{100}\) Whereas many cities have one central hunger response organization, Philadelphia houses two: SHARE (Self-Help and Resource Exchange) and Philabundance. SHARE takes the lead on distributing government provided commodity and wholesale foods; Philabundance partners with Feeding America as well as recovers local food industry surplus. The case study that follows analyzes the operations of SHARE and Philabundance and their interactions with programs. Trends that emerge demonstrate how broad themes in the evolution of America’s hunger response have played out in one of the nation’s hungriest cities.

HUNGER IN PHILADELPHIA

With 22\% of its citizens classified as food insecure, Philadelphia experiences hunger to a greater extent than any other city in Pennsylvania.\(^ {101}\) Philadelphia’s food insecure population ranges from individuals among the working poor to individuals living in deep poverty. Deep poverty is defined as individuals with income equal to 50\% or less of the poverty line.\(^ {102}\) For example, a family of four living in deep poverty has an annual income of $12,000 or less (the poverty line for a family of four is $24,000).\(^ {103}\)

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100 Alfred Lubrano, “Among the 10 Largest Cities, Philly has the Highest Deep-Poverty Rate,” Philadelphia Magazine.
101 “Coalition Against Hunger,” Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger.
102 Lubrano, “Among the 10 Largest Cities, Philly has the Highest Deep-Poverty Rate.”
103 Ibid.
Philadelphia’s rate of deep poverty is 12.5% (186,000 people), twice the national average.104 People living in deep poverty are more likely to utilize the soup kitchen method of food assistance because their access to a working kitchen and ability to pay utility bills is unreliable. Soup kitchens provide hot meals for individuals, usually in churches or other religious institutions. On the other end of the spectrum, working poor individuals spend a minimum of 27 weeks per year in the workforce, either working or looking for work, and have incomes below the poverty level.105 Working poor require food assistance to expand their purchasing power in order to use what income they do have to pay rent, utilities and other expenses while still feeding their families. People classified as working poor are more likely to utilize package and take-home food programs from food cupboards. The number of people using food cupboards in Philadelphia has gone up 30% since 2011, reflecting the national trend of increasing food insecurity among people in the workforce.106

In addition to the extent of food insecurity in Philadelphia, the city is unique in that it has two large anti-hunger organizations operating side-by-side, rather than a single organization handing both government programs and private procurement. In Philadelphia, SHARE handles government contracts and Philabundance distributes significant amounts of purchased and recovered food. These two Philadelphia organizations also have contrasting philosophies: SHARE partners extensively with volunteers and Philabundance relies on a corporate structure. Studying the strategies

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104 Interview with Mara Natkins (Director of Development for SHARE Food Program).
106 Interview with Mara Natkins.
and philosophies of these two organizations serves as a useful lens for exploring the evolution, strengths and limitations of different approaches to hunger relief.

PHILADELPHIA’S CHARITABLE HUNGER RESPONSE

In Philadelphia, the primary charitable response to increasing levels of need has been the growth of two major public/private anti-hunger organizations: SHARE and Philabundance. Although SHARE and Philabundance operate alongside each other to provide for the network of soup kitchens and food pantries in Philadelphia, key philosophical distinctions differentiate the organizations. SHARE’s philosophy emphasizes maximizing awareness and putting passion and humanity into food distribution, engaging both volunteers and clients in the process. Those who receive food from SHARE must complete “good deed” hours within SHARE or the larger Philadelphia community. Philabundance’s philosophy is centered upon logistics and efficiency: feeding the greatest number of people at the lowest cost possible with the majority of operations carried out by staff rather than volunteers. While this philosophy is inherently more automated, staff can get the job done more efficiently and on a larger scale than would volunteers.

Each approach has merit. SHARE’s emphasis on involving more people in anti-hunger work engages the food insecure as partners, raises awareness (critical for building political support and fund raising) and establishes a grassroots community presence. The focus on efficiency and scale at Philabundance uses staff to expand operations and raises awareness through public relations and media campaigns, “but
fewer individuals are involved in the effort.”

Both strategies build broader hunger awareness and help to meet the needs of hungry individuals, but strategically, these two organizations are at least to some extent at odds. Challenges inherent in having two organizations pursue similar agendas in different ways are discussed throughout this chapter – including that each organization collects and reports data differently, as will become evident in the SHARE and Philabundance sections.

Another large difference between SHARE and Philabundance is their membership model. Pantries served by SHARE are recertified each year, but do not pay a membership or shared maintenance fee. This reflects SHARE’s approach of serving as a resource to the small grassroots organizations that have been the backbone of hunger relief programs for decades, despite their flaws. Philabundance member agencies renew memberships each year, and only reapply if their membership is dormant for two years. There is a $75 annual membership fee and agencies pay a shared maintenance fee for the food they order. Moreover, agencies must be able to distribute at least 3,000 pounds of food in the previous 12 month period. The more complex membership structure for Philabundance reflects the direction in which Philabundance would like to drive grassroots hunger response: standardization, scale and efficiency. Many pantries are members of both organizations. SHARE gives Philabundance $250,000 annually to extend a line of credit to pantries, enabling pantries to obtain Philabundance’s food for the $0.19 per pound shared maintenance

107 Interview with William Clark.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
fee in addition to SHARE’s government food, which is distributed free of charge.\textsuperscript{111} With this structure, pantries are able to take advantage of Philadelphia’s two charitable food distributors and stock a wider variety of food for their clients.

It is perhaps in the executive directors’ attitudes toward Philadelphia’s network of pantries and kitchens that philosophical differences between SHARE and Philabundance are most clearly demonstrated. A challenge inherent in a network of 700 agencies is accommodating the different needs of each organization and ensuring that each organization has the proper resources (particularly refrigeration and money for utility bills) to effectively serve clients. Furthermore, from a client’s perspective, it is problematic that these small kitchens and pantries may be open only a few hours each week and are placed only where churches and charities choose to host them, rather than being strategically located such that all neighborhoods have a pantry. While the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger (“Coalition”) has worked to help pantries in the same neighborhood coordinate their days and hours of operation, there is no way to guarantee that a pantry is open when and where clients need them. Despite these issues, Steveanna Wynn, Executive Director of SHARE, has good reason to praise the volunteers who run these pantries as heroes of the anti-hunger movement deserving of all the support she can give. “Are they perfect, is it a perfect system? No. Is it the one we have? Yes. So we need to empower, we need to encourage, and we need to raise money for what they need.”\textsuperscript{112} In contrast, Philabundance Executive Director Glenn Bergman is eager to see a more modern model emerge. Bergman envisions this

\textsuperscript{111} Interview with Steveanna Wynn.
\textsuperscript{112} Interview with Steveanna Wynn.
shift happening naturally as people who run these small operations, mostly elderly, are no longer able to support them. Rather than hoping for younger volunteers to step in, Bergman would like to see these small programs consolidate into hubs that provide more services, are open more consistent hours and yield more accurate data.

As is evident by their membership models and philosophies, SHARE builds on the strength of volunteers and faith-based networks that play a critical role in addressing hunger in their communities whereas Philabundance is looking to expand and modernize Philadelphia’s charitable response system to serve more people more effectively. Despite these distinct differences, both are important in mobilizing resources that food insecure individuals in Philadelphia cannot afford to do without.

The third organization, the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger, is not involved with distributing food, but works in alliance with the region’s anti-hunger agencies to improve the efficacy of both government anti-hunger programs and the region’s network of food pantries and soup kitchens. The Coalition’s SNAP hotline assists over 5,000 qualifying individuals in registering for SNAP each year. They also use their hotline to help clients find pantries, kitchens and summer meal programs in their neighborhoods. Their VIP (Victory in Partnership) Project networks some of Philadelphia’s 700 food pantries and soup kitchens so they can coordinate resources and discuss challenges, and thereby increase the efficiency and capacity of Philadelphia’s grassroots hunger response. The Coalition additionally supports Philadelphia’s pantries and kitchens by sponsoring the city’s annual Walk Against

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113 “Coalition Against Hunger,” Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger.
114 Ibid.
Hunger, which provides a major source of funding for many of them. Finally, the Coalition has obtained grants to support two “Green Light Pantries” that provide solely nutritious food to clients.\textsuperscript{115} Pantries that serve only healthy food, while less efficient than other models in terms of pounds of food distributed and number of people served, are a visible indication of ongoing efforts to increase the nutritional value of charitable food. The Coalition’s work demonstrates increasing collaboration between Philadelphia’s charitable efforts as well as dedication to political advocacy as a means of addressing hunger. The evolution of the food banks as well as the emergence of the Coalition show how hunger response has increasingly become a joint effort between private and public institutions.

Within Philadelphia’s charitable response, improvements have been made in levels of collaboration. In the realm of data sharing,\textsuperscript{116} Philabundance, SHARE and the Coalition are working together to administer a 2017 survey assessing the impact and reach of Philadelphia hunger response for the first time ever.\textsuperscript{117} Having comprehensive information about the strengths and limitations of Philadelphia’s hunger response will serve as an important driver of innovation. In the realm of advocacy, Philabundance and the Coalition have coordinated their efforts, dividing issues on which each organization will take the lead. This progress is an important step, but also leaves room for further improvements in achieving a united, coordinated and fully maximized response. We now turn to look at the strengths and limitations of Philadelphia’s two main anti-hunger organizations as they currently function.

\textsuperscript{115} “Coalition Against Hunger,” Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger.
\textsuperscript{116} Interview with Tanya Sen.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
SHARE FOOD PROGRAM

As previously mentioned, SHARE’s mission emphasizes creating partnerships with clients as a tool to create a movement and build community. Focus on volunteerism also enables SHARE to efficiently handle state and federal commodity distribution programs that provide little funding for distribution. SHARE volunteers organize and package government food for distribution to feeding sites. SHARE serves 505 of Philadelphia’s 700 volunteer-led food pantries in addition to engaging with education and advocacy. In FY2015, SHARE distributed 26.6 million pounds of emergency food relief, reaching an average of 607,513 low-income individuals each month. This figure represents a 31.4% increase from four years prior.

SHARE Program Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Food Relief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In 2015, SHARE distributed 24.6 million pounds of food to 505 Philadelphia County food pantries through this program. Pantry directors pick up food two times each month, at which point they show declarations of need proving that clients have incomes below 150% of the poverty line. Funding comes from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHARE Package Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SHARE expands food access by selling packages at 30-40% below retail value that can be paid for using government benefits. SHARE can offer this price because they purchase in bulk, have volunteers to sort/package, and have limited distribution costs. There are about 60 different food items available for purchase through this program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nice Roots Farm</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Nice Roots Farm Program harvested 15,000 pounds of produce in FY2015. Produce (supplemented by purchased food) is sold in farmers’ markets at 15 schools and three senior centers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSFP provides monthly food boxes to over 6,000 seniors. Government money from CSFP goes toward program staffing, a truck, maintenance and gas, warehouse space, boxes, tape, labels, and newsletters.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Advocacy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SHARE advocates at national, state, and local levels. A particular issue SHARE focuses on is increased state food funding and SNAP benefits.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

118 “Our Background,” SHARE Food Program.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid.
121 “Our Programs,” SHARE Food Program.
The Emergency Food Relief Program is SHARE’s largest program through which 24.6 million pounds of food was distributed in 2015.\textsuperscript{122} Pantries that receive emergency food are recertified annually to demonstrate their capacity to store food safely, distribute food without favoritism or discrimination and keep orderly records, all critical to participation in highly regulated federal and state programs.\textsuperscript{123} SHARE checks these records twice each month when food pantry directors pick up food. Declarations of need must be shown to prove that the clients pantries serve have incomes below 150\% of the poverty line (the participation threshold for federal commodity distribution and TEFAP programs).\textsuperscript{124} While federal commodity food and purchase programs provide crucial food to communities, they are restrictive in that pantries receiving this food can only use it to serve individuals with incomes below the government-set threshold, rather than to any individual who is food insecure.

SHARE is also the lead agency for the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP), which supplies food for the Emergency Relief Program in conjunction with TEFAP. Pennsylvania was the first state to implement a State Food Purchase Program in 1992 and has one of the largest programs of its kind nationally.\textsuperscript{125} By providing cash grants, the state government partners with food banks to serve Pennsylvania residents. SFPP helps provide food to organizations that serve more than 1.3 million low-income residents, of which 572,006 are in Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{126} Cash grants, allocated by county, assist in purchasing and transporting food. In short, SFPP supplements the efforts of

\textsuperscript{122} “Our Programs,” \textit{SHARE Food Program}.
\textsuperscript{123} Interview with Mara Natkins.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{125} “State Food Purchase Program,” \textit{Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture}.
\textsuperscript{126} “Coalition Against Hunger,” \textit{Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger}. 
regional anti-hunger organizations that work to make food more accessible to low-income households. Restrictions imposed on SFPP funds require remarkable efficiency in program administration: 8% of expenditures can fund administrative and logistical overhead and 92% must fund food purchases. Anti-hunger organizations can only distribute food purchased with SFPP funds to individuals with incomes below 150% of the poverty line. In FY2015, Pennsylvania’s SFPP grant funds amounted to $16.9 million, $3,997,000 of which went to Philadelphia ($3,789,500 for food, $51,000 for equipment and $156,000 for administrative costs). Food purchased in Philadelphia served 270,769 households and enabled 4,044,205 meals. While the SFPP program helps many people, funding levels have not kept up with soaring food demand. In fact, Pennsylvania lawmakers reduced the SFPP budget from $18.75 million in FY2007 to $17.4 million in FY2013. This reduction created a gap that city and state public/private hunger response networks still struggle to fill.

When sourcing food for pantries, SHARE tries to balance purchasing food that is as healthy as possible, but also the greatest volume possible. Like other food banks across the nation, SHARE strives to increase the nutritional value of distributed food while balancing the fact that nutritious food is often times more expensive than less healthy options. Purchasing only healthy food would therefore feed fewer people. Implementing distribution of healthier food will require changing a metric of success.

127 “Our Programs,” SHARE Food Program.
128 Interview with Steveanna Wynn.
129 State Food Purchase Program,” Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, 3.
130 Ibid., 4.
131 Ibid., 7.
132 Ibid., 9.
133 “Coalition Against Hunger,” Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger
134 Interview with Mara Natkins.
from pounds of food distributed to nutritional quality of food distributed as well as willingness to refuse donations of unhealthy products. Using the current poundage metric of success, in 2015, SHARE’s Emergency Food Relief Program, which provides food obtained through TEFAP and SFPP, served over 607,000 of the region’s poorest residents (as required by government guidelines) with 24.6 million pounds of food in Philadelphia alone.\textsuperscript{135} Thus, each person received an average of 40.5 pounds of food over the course of the year – or 0.8 pounds per week (based on USDA guidelines, a meal consists of 1.2 pounds of food).\textsuperscript{136} This scant amount reinforces Poppendieck and Berg’s critique about the need to enlarge federal safety net programs. However, if government provisions are limited, it is logical to allocate food toward the highest need individuals so the finite supply does not become too diluted. But if the goal is to eliminate food insecurity, two actions must be taken. First, society must compel government to grow these programs. Second, charitable organizations must simultaneously grow initiatives without constraints.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chart.png}
\caption{Individuals Served by SHARE’s Emergency Food Relief Programs}
\end{figure}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{135} Interview with Mara Natkins.
\textsuperscript{136} Feeding America, “2013 Annual Report,” 5.
\textsuperscript{137} “Our Background,” SHARE Food Program.
\end{flushleft}
SHARE’s other large program is the Package Program, which “expands access to affordable food.” SHARE buys the food in packages at wholesale prices and sells them at a 30-40% below retail value. This reasonable price ($10-$20, which can be paid for using SNAP) is possible because SHARE purchases in bulk, has volunteers to sort/package and has limited distribution costs. The small recipient contribution reflects SHARE’s partnership and empowerment philosophy. “Putting money in, getting value out and being involved is transformative; a hand up, not a hand out.” The package program is SHARE’s founding program and was the only offering, provided only to the Philadelphia area, when Wynn joined SHARE in 1989. Now, SHARE’s package program serves Delaware, New Jersey, Queens, Maryland and Pennsylvania. There are about 60 different food items offered within the set boxes, and items included can change from month to month based on recipients’ requests.

Some of SHARE’s food package selection is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Package - $20</th>
<th>Kidney Health Package - $20</th>
<th>Diabetes Health Package - $20</th>
<th>Heart Health Package - $20</th>
<th>Produce Package - $20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ground Beef, Chicken Breast, Turkey Breakfast Sausage, Southwest Breaded Cod, Eggs, Fresh Vegetables, Fresh Fruit, Onions, Sweet Potatoes, White Potatoes</td>
<td>Chicken Breast, Eggs, Fruits and Vegetables High in Omega 3s and Vitamins K &amp; C</td>
<td>Low-Sodium Canned Beans, Eggs, Dark Leafy Greens, Fruits and Vegetables High in Omega 3s</td>
<td>Chicken Breast, Eggs, Fruits and Vegetables High in Vitamins A, C &amp; E, Low-Sodium Canned Beans, Seeds and Whole Grains</td>
<td>Fresh Vegetables, Fresh Fruits, Eggs, Onions, Sweet Potatoes and White Potatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit Package - $15</td>
<td>Small Produce Package - $10</td>
<td>Large Produce Package - $15</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Package - $30</td>
<td>Senior Package - $20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

138 Interview with Mara Natkins.
139 Ibid.
140 SHARE Food Program October 2016 Package Order Form.
141 Interview with Mara Natkins.
142 Ibid.
143 Interview with Steveanna Wynn.
144 Ibid.
145 Ibid.
146 SHARE Food Program November 2016 Package Order Form.
Participants and partnership organizations order food at the beginning of the month, then there is a week for packing and a week for pickup at the SHARE headquarters.\textsuperscript{147} Alternatively, big groups can distribute the food packages at their own location (“host site”) for a small delivery fee - $1 per box for Philadelphia area host sites and $1.50 per box for host sites outside of the Philadelphia area.\textsuperscript{148} Host sites take orders for a group, collect money and place a joint order. Packages are then brought to host sites for distribution.\textsuperscript{149} Another benefit of the SHARE Package Program is that the delivery comes at the end of the month when food insecure individuals are most likely to have a food shortage. In exchange for box purchases, SHARE asks clients to volunteer two hours of their time. Because food is purchased by SHARE rather than with government funds, there are no restrictions for participants. Instead, anyone who would like a package or would benefit from the increased purchasing power these packages provide can participate. This low-price model is representative of scalable social enterprise programs that are an important component of future hunger response evolution.

Less substantial programs in terms of pounds donated, but representative of efforts to get healthier, fresher food into the charitably food system, include produce from the Nice Roots Farm and Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). Both programs provide SHARE the opportunity to educate about healthy cooking as well as storing and preserving vegetables. Pamphlets and healthy recipes are included in packages and at farmers’ markets, thus disseminating the information to clients of

\textsuperscript{147} Interview with Mara Natkins.
\textsuperscript{148} SHARE Food Program November 2016 Package Order Form.
\textsuperscript{149} Interview with Mara Natkins.
these programs. Nice Roots Farm is a private farm that provides affordable produce to the community. While the program only yields 15,000 pounds of produce a year, it is supplemented with purchased food and sold in farmers’ markets at 15 schools and three senior centers.\textsuperscript{150} CSFP, a government program through which commodity products are distributed in boxes, serves low-income seniors. Philabundance and SHARE both provide this program, which is important in that food insecure seniors receive 30 pounds of shelf-stable food, but challenging in that 30 pounds may be difficult for a senior to lift and transport.

Lastly, SHARE actively advocates on issues surrounding food justice. At the state level, Wynn chairs the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture’s State Advisory committee and Hunger Free Pennsylvania. At the local level, Wynn serves on Philadelphia’s Food Policy Action Committee as well as the Food Access Collaborative. “Any time there’s an issue that would affect the people we are serving we definitely talk to legislatures...when it comes to committees that deal with national or local food, either [Wynn] serves on it or someone else on staff.”\textsuperscript{151} One particular issue SHARE advocated around was the proposed asset test for SNAP benefits. SHARE also is advocating constantly for increased state food funding.

In FYE June 30, 2014, 71.3% of SHARE’s expenditures were on food. SHARE’s financial statement did not include a breakdown of food expenditure by food type, so the extent to which SHARE is increasingly distributing healthy foods cannot be

\textsuperscript{150} “Our Programs,” SHARE Food Program.
\textsuperscript{151} Interview with Steveanna Wynn.
evaluated; however, overall, SHARE’s mission and programs indicate a commitment to promoting healthy eating among its clients.

Overall SHARE’s operations reflect the larger changes of social enterprise models, political advocacy and emphasis on nutritious food within charitable hunger response. First, SHARE’s Package Program represents a model of social enterprise that has already proven its ability to be scaled. In the past 30 years, the package program has grown from serving only Philadelphia residents to serving individuals throughout the Delaware Valley. Like all social enterprise models, there are no participation restrictions, allowing the Package Program to more closely resemble mainstream food distribution with regard to accessibility and responsiveness to consumer feedback. Because program success relies on recurring purchases, package contents must reflect consumer demand. Second, SHARE’s staff has demonstrated a strong commitment to political advocacy. While SHARE’s advocacy at local, state and federal levels is extensive, it focuses mostly on safety net programs and other issues directly related to increasing benefits for food insecure individuals. Expanding advocacy to an anti-poverty agenda will help put SHARE at the frontier of the anti-hunger movement. Finally, SHARE appears to be making an effort to increase healthy food distribution. Although reporting is limited in this regard, evidence exists in SHARE’s farm programs, farmers’ markets and educational initiatives. The next section examines the extent to which Philabundance demonstrates the larger trends in charitable food distribution.
The mission of Philabundance is to “drive hunger from our communities today and end hunger forever, measuring success on how many people no longer need assistance rather than how many pounds of food we have moved.” It strives to fulfill this mission through the following programs:

### Philabundance Program Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grocers Against Hunger</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocers Against Hunger connects local grocery stores to local agencies to reallocate food that would otherwise go to waste. Because of strict guidelines, grocers often discard food items even if they are completely safe to eat. Philabundance increases emergency food distribution by collecting this food for distribution to low-income individuals. The program rescued 10 million pounds of food in FY2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSFP is a senior food assistance program that provides USDA-donated food to 4,500 low-income seniors each month. Boxes contain 30 pounds of shelf-stable foods. To be eligible, participants must be 60 years or older, have an income at or below 150% of the poverty line, and be a resident of Pennsylvania.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fare &amp; Square</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fare &amp; Square is a non-profit grocery store that, in addition to accepting SNAP and having low pricing, offers SNAP outreach. The store is located in Chester County, a food desert within the Philabundance distribution network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fresh for All</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh for All is a traveling farmers market set up at the same locations each week so local residents can rely on its availability. Recipients must submit basic household information for the program to maintain funding but there are no eligibility qualifications. In FY2013, more than 13,000 households were served by this initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gleaning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philabundance collaborates with local farms to provide fresh, local produce to hungry neighbors throughout the Delaware Valley. When partners have an unmarketable surplus, volunteers harvest the produce to be distributed through Philabundance channels. In FY2015, over 220,000 pounds of fresh produce was harvested for Philabundance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kids Bites</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launched in 2012, Kids Bites partners with Lowell Elementary School to distribute fresh produce, protein, and dairy for families of enrolled students two times each month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philabundance Community Kitchen</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founded in 2000 as a culinary arts vocational training program, the kitchen both trains low-income men and women to work in commercial kitchens and supplies meals to area soup kitchens. In 2012, 350,000 meals were generated by the Philadelphia Community Kitchen Program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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152. “Philabundance Advocacy Advisory Council Meeting Materials.”

These programs demonstrate that Philabundance has taken critiques of the charitable food system to heart and is trying to reinvent its approach to better serve today’s food insecure population. As noted above, Bergman hopes to see fewer small food pantries as individuals who run them, often times elderly, become unable to continue operations. Rather than replacing these individuals, he looks forward to food distribution being consolidated into neighborhood hubs where there is more capacity to address poverty at its root, including employment, health and educational programs that help get clients back on their feet. These hubs would also help to address the challenges inherent in having hundreds of small organizations by standardizing food distribution, increasing tracking accuracy and providing a range of services to help clients get back on their feet. As a step towards connecting food distribution with job training and employment, Philabundance runs Philabundance Community Kitchen (PCK), which provides both occupational training and prepared meals for food insecure individuals within its geographic reach.

Philabundance, which primarily serves pantries, kitchens and shelters, has a logistically complex operation due to the many source streams from which it obtains food. Food recovery, especially for perishables, requires not only maintaining strong relationships with corporate donors, but also having the agility to retrieve, process and distribute food within short timeframes. Sourcing food purchases similarly requires a significant time investment. Staff must know when and where to look for quality products at bargain prices, and often must participate in auctions for these items. The large number of personnel required to maintain Philabundance’s 10 source streams
make operating expenses fairly large.\textsuperscript{154} Compared to SHARE, which has nine office staff and 13 total employees, Philabundance has a comprehensive corporate structure comprised of 140 employees that includes a robust executive suite as well as finance, partnership, media, program management and human resource divisions.\textsuperscript{155} In 2015, this staff sourced 28 million pounds of food for Philabundance’s network of 350 member agencies.\textsuperscript{156} This FY2015 number is projected to decrease slightly, based on the FY2016 Philabundance Source Stream Composition, shown below.\textsuperscript{157} SHARE is able to distribute nearly the same amount of emergency food because it receives food from government and relies heavily on volunteers. SHARE’s package program is not included in the 26.6 million pounds of food distributed in 2015.

\textsuperscript{155} Interview with Glenn Bergman.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{157} FY2016 Philabundance Source Stream Composition.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.
Philabundance’s core program is recovering food that would otherwise go to waste and distributing it through their grassroots partners.159 Food rescue is both Philabundance’s biggest food source and its highest growth area. As noted below, Bergman hopes to see food rescue legislation that would further increase the amount of recovered food from supermarkets and restaurants. While Philabundance strives to increase the nutritional value of their food, they have to work with the fact that such a large portion of their food comes from donations, whose nutritional value they cannot control. In considering the total value of highlighted categories (categories considered Food for Encouragement), we see that 56.6% of the donated food Philabundance received in 2014 was considered Food to Encourage, while 47.3% of the donated food Philabundance received in 2015 was considered Food to Encourage.160 Bergman is working to improve this measure, and has stopped accepting soda donations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Ended September 30, 2015</th>
<th>Year Ended September 30, 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Non-Food**                  | **Value per Pound | Total Pounds | Total Value  
|                               | $ 6.98                 | 234,901      | $ 1,640,236   |
| **Baby Food**                 | $ 7.42                 | 5,850        | 49,407        |
| **Beverage**                  | $ 0.60                 | 425,621      | 255,373       |
| **Bread/Bakery**              | $ 2.24                 | 2,005,477    | 4,492,268     |
| **Cereal**                    | $ 3.02                 | 247,021      | 746,003       |
| **Meals, Soups, Entrees**     | $ 1.89                 | 239,010      | 451,728       |
| **Dairy**                     | $ 1.70                 | 1,776,325    | 3,009,089     |
| **Dessert**                   | $ 2.00                 | 35,882       | 71,764        |
| **Dressing**                  | $ 1.85                 | 16,718       | 30,928        |
| **Fruit**                     | $ 0.93                 | 104,419      | 97,110        |
| **Cleaning**                  | $ 1.38                 | 1,665        | 2,298         |
| **Juice**                     | $ 0.78                 | 1,243,224    | 969,715       |
| **Meat**                      | $ 2.63                 | 2,058,788    | 5,326,923     |
| ***Mixed Foods**              | $ 1.70                 | 4,952,643    | 8,419,493     |
| **Non-Dairy**                 | $ 1.10                 | 440,780      | 484,858       |
| **Pasta**                     | $ 2.77                 | 305,252      | 845,548       |
| **Protein**                   | $ 1.49                 | 1,133,671    | 1,689,870     |
| **Snack Food**                | $ 2.89                 | 133,889      | 386,939       |
| **Condiments**                | $ 1.32                 | 1,350        | 1,792         |
| **Vegetables**                | $ 1.00                 | 808,693      | 808,693       |
| **Produce**                   | $ 0.54                 | 10,253,401   | 5,536,836     |
| **Totals**                    | $ 1.38                 | 25,911,870   | 35,780,465    |

160 Ibid., 9.
161 Ibid.
Lastly, Philabundance owns and operates a non-profit grocery store called Fare and Square in Chester, Pennsylvania. Fare and Square is a prototype grocery store that provides access to fresh produce at a low cost in a food desert. According to the USDA, food deserts are neighborhoods without access to “fresh fruit, vegetables and other healthful foods, usually found in impoverished areas... due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers’ markets and healthy food providers.” Fare and Square is the only supermarket in Chester, and is therefore a critical resource for its low-income residents. Bergman hopes to improve this model by offering prepared food for clients to purchase in addition to the fresh produce and shelf-stable options. Overall, this store furthers Bergman’s vision of hunger response that is regulated, reliable and robust.

In its advocacy efforts, Philabundance has a partnership with the Coalition Against Hunger in which each organization takes the lead on different advocacy issues. Together, the organizations work toward systematic change in government programs, budgets and food legislation. One particular legislative issue Bergman believes is critical to the future of food banking is legislation similar to what exists in Paris. Passed in early 2016, the legislation makes it illegal for grocery stores to throw away unsold food approaching its “best-before” date. Of the 14.2 billion pounds of food France throws away each year, 67% (9.5 billion pounds) is thrown away by the end consumer, 15% (2.1 billion pounds) by restaurants and 11% (1.6 billion pounds) by grocery stores. The difference such legislation could make in the United States is suggested

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162 “USDA Defines Food Deserts,” *Nutrition Digest.*
164 Ibid.
by the fact that of the 104.8 billion pounds of food thrown away throughout the country each year, 51.5% (54 billion pounds) is thrown away by the end consumer, 30.5% (32 billion pounds) by restaurants and 15.3% (16 billion pounds) by grocery stores. A comparison of food in the United States and France is shown in the graph below:

If United States legislation mandated some sort of secondary market or economically viable way of distributing this food to those in need, charitable organizations would be able to better meet the needs of many more individuals. Having recognized this, Bergman is working toward a United States prototype of such legislation in Philadelphia. Due to its extensive sourcing capabilities, Philabundance is well position to capitalize on food recovery legislation in ways that Bergman hopes would provide a model for other communities.

Philabundance spent 71.1% of its total operating expenses on food acquisition. Like SHARE, Philabundance food acquisition efforts are focused on

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increasing the proportion of nutritious food distributed without sacrificing the number of people Philabundance is able to serve.

**THEMES IN PHILADELPHIA’S HUNGER RESPONSE**

Having two large hunger response organizations (SHARE and Philabundance) in Philadelphia has been both a blessing and a curse. The two organizations each have a range of programs that reflect their different philosophies; however, when there are different sources of food and low levels of collaboration, food may not be distributed as efficiently as possible. If agencies receive food from both organizations, that requires two sets of deliveries to the same location. While both SHARE and Philabundance work to address hunger and focus on healthy food, their conflicting operational styles have created tensions that, at times, have made it difficult for the two organizations to work together. Despite these challenges, however, recent developments within Philadelphia’s charitable hunger response landscape indicate that collaboration is on the rise. The organizations are increasingly coordinating efforts to improve the efficiency of hunger response, hunger reporting and political advocacy.

Another theme in Philadelphia’s hunger response is an increasing emphasis on social enterprise, which both SHARE and Philabundance are exploring within the context of their different models. In Philadelphia, social enterprise has taken two main forms. The first is exemplified by SHARE’s Food Package Program, which utilizes partnerships to meet people where they are, be it in schools, the workforce, medical settings or community centers. Through partnerships, anti-hunger organizations can deliver food for host sites to distribute in a convenient, non-stigmatized manner. This
form of social enterprise is sustainable, effective and responsive to consumer feedback. It can also be easily replicated in both urban and rural areas, as long as there are volunteers to help sort and package food. The bulk purchasing/volunteer-based model that enables food banks to sell quality food at below market prices increases purchasing power of people with incomes near the poverty line. Furthermore, because clients are purchasing the boxes, the contents must reflect consumer demand.

The social enterprise second model, exemplified by Philabundance’s non-profit supermarket, Fare and Square, has particular merit in food deserts. Non-profit grocery stores can sell products for less than what they would cost in a for-profit store because they are able to secure products at lower prices. For example, these grocery stores purchase soup from Campbell’s at a discount, which Campbell’s is willing to do because their soup would not otherwise be sold in a low-income food desert area, where for-profit chains are not operating. In addition to increasing market share, Campbell’s receives positive public relations value and still makes a profit, even if it is not as large as if they were selling to for-profit corporations. This model increases the efficiency of supplemental food assistance because it allows recipients to shop for all of their items in the same place, rather than receiving some food from a pantry and some food from a store.

“None of the [current] mechanisms of food distribution negate the need of households to go to the store and shop, it just changes what they shop for. They either shop for what they didn’t get from the food bank or shop for what they need and pay less for it. In both situations, families try to get the most food for the minimum amount of money.”

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167 Interview with William Clark.
The not-for-profit grocery store model makes acquiring food a one-stop endeavor for families strapped for both money and time. Not-for-profit grocery stores can be a highly effective model in areas with a high enough concentration of low-income people where for-profit stores cannot operate profitably.

Proponents of social enterprise models argue that the ideal food distribution system for the poor functions similarly to food distribution for affluent people, except that social enterprises titrate prices to the point where food is affordable for food insecure shoppers. A new restaurant model has emerged that similarly titrates prices so that food insecure individuals can eat in mainstream channels. One in Philadelphia, opened in Fall 2016, is called EAT (Everyone at the Table). EAT’s mission is to provide fresh, nutritious meals to anyone who walks through the door. At the end of the meal, each person receives a check with a suggested price of $12; however, this price is truly a suggestion. These restaurants are meant to be self-sustaining and seek to locate in areas where some patrons are able to pay more than the suggested price in order to compensate for those who pay less or nothing at all.

Social enterprise alone cannot solve the problem of hunger and food insecurity. First, people must have access to either public benefits or some level of cash as well as the proper equipment to prepare food in their kitchens. Second, in cities where the cost of living is high, higher wages, housing subsidies and expanded SNAP benefits are necessary to enable people to purchase and prepare adequate amounts of healthy foods. The two systems (SNAP and social enterprise) have the potential to work hand in hand by making SNAP benefits stretch further to meet household food needs.
From looking at Philadelphia, it is clear that both volunteer-based and corporate-based approaches have a place within charitable hunger response. SHARE’s volunteer-based program, while perhaps less innovative, treats partners with dignity and respect, fostering community growth. Philabundance’s corporate based model has more flexibility for innovation and growth. Because food is obtained through private channels rather than government, Philabundance can increase pounds distributed without relying on government to increase provisions. Rather, they can increase their sourcing staff to expand their network of retail, manufacturing and farm partners. Building upon the best aspects of both programs will help charitable food operations throughout the country to further develop to meet community needs.
CONCLUSION

“What’s necessary is the desire to be innovative and recognize that traditional pantries, shelters and soup kitchens are not necessarily continuing to meet the needs of people who are food insecure.... It’s a changing model, and it’s going to be about meeting people where they are.”

-Amy Laboy, Greater Chicago Food Depository

INCREASED COMPETENCY OF THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE NETWORK

In conclusion, hunger response has evolved as a hybrid between private and governmental action. This hybrid has improved significantly over the last 30 years, and there are many indications that it can continue improving in the future. This preliminary study of the evolution of anti-hunger programs suggests that the United States can significantly reduce hunger through expansion of effective and efficient government programs as well as “thoughtful and strategic partnerships between the nonprofit, government, corporate and philanthropic sectors.”168 Moreover, our public/private charitable response to hunger has evolved in important ways that addresses many of the initial critiques made by Poppendieck and Berg. Poppendieck’s initial critique outlined what is wrong with emergency food through “Seven Deadly ‘Ins’” - insufficiency, inappropriateness, nutritional inadequacy, instability, inaccessibility, inefficiency and indignity.

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168 Knott, “Feeding America in Times of Change,” 140.
**Insufficiency.** “The quality, quantity and appropriateness of the food” pose a problem in emergency food distribution. When food banks were originally founded, food was distributed on a first come, first serve basis, and the food banks had little to no say over what food they distributed. The new choice system of food acquisition by food banks from Feeding America, as well as the fact that many food banks purchase food through their own channels means that food banks have more autonomy over what food is distributed to their network of food pantries and soup kitchens. However, increased control over the appropriateness of food does not negate for food banks the important tradeoff between the quality and quantity of food purchased. Sufficiency of healthy foods remains a challenge for the charitable food system to overcome.

**Inappropriateness.** “If the quantity needed is difficult to estimate, the choice of food pantry items [or soup kitchen menus] is virtually impossible to get right.” Given that pantries and soup kitchens cannot customize meals for individual clients, food distributed may not meet their individual needs. Food bank evolution has begun to improve responsiveness to community preferences and needs in a number of ways. First, choice pantries have emerged in which clients choose what food they receive rather than getting a standard box. Second, responsiveness has been made easier by digital requests of grassroots organizations to food banks and digital requests of food banks to Feeding America. Third, social enterprise helps get appropriate food to food insecure individuals. In social enterprise models, increased purchasing power empowers clients with more consumer choice than was characteristic of charitable

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169 Poppendieck, Sweet Charity, 210.
170 Ibid., 213.
food systems in their infancy. The ideal social enterprise model allows its food insecure customers to shop with the same ease and nearly the same degree of choice as other consumers by making each dollar stretch farther.

_Nutritional Inadequacy._ Given the extent to which charitable food “is supply driven, rather than need given, it will continue to distribute more sweets and snacks” and less items high in nutritional value. 171 While nutrition is acknowledged to a greater extent today than it has been in the past, distributing perishable food remains a challenge for charitable food distribution networks. In recent years; however, an expansion of refrigerated infrastructure (trucks and grants for refrigeration systems in member agencies) has increased the capacity of the charitable food system to move fresh produce, meat and dairy. Since this expansion, food banks have significantly increased distribution of fresh, healthy food. Additionally, some food banks now refuse to accept soda in their recovery programs, despite that it adds significant poundage to their reporting.

_Instability._ “Government commodities accumulate when production and market conditions interact to produce a surplus” – but surpluses are inherently temporary. 172 When I visited the SHARE warehouse, the USDA was clearly dealing with a cranberry surplus. Cranberry juice, cranberry sauce, dried cranberries, frozen cranberries and any other cranberry product one could think of lined the warehouse floor. In another month, tomato farmers might have had a surplus, leading to a warehouse full of ketchup, marinara and various other tomato products. Clearly commodity instability

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171 Poppendieck, _Sweet Charity_, 216.
172 Ibid., 217.
still exists today; however, the way its distribution is handled has greatly improved. Feeding America’s national network of food banks now incorporates government surpluses with purchased and recovered food to redistribute surplus from areas of excess to areas of need. This combination enables food banks to provide a more balanced and stable product offering and makes food recovery an important, although still unreliable, method of increasing food distribution by charitable networks.

Inaccessibility. Because kitchens and pantries exist wherever individuals are motivated to create them, rather where they are needed most, the overall system is “haphazard and erratic, fragmented and in some places duplicative.”173 In cities like Philadelphia with robust anti-hunger organizations that work with hundreds of agencies, significant efforts have been made to map where pantries and kitchens exist and to coordinate their schedules. However, because the current system relies so heavily on volunteerism, the problem remains hard to address. Despite this difficulty, food banks have worked to increase access. There are traveling farmers’ markets and nutrition programs offered through schools that bring fresh produce to areas that need it. Additionally, if food bank leaders like Glenn Bergman succeed in consolidating food distribution into hubs with regular, reliable hours, utilizing feeding programs will be made easier for the clients that need them.

Inefficiency. “Individually, many food banks are spectacularly efficient operations...but overall, the system is rife with inefficiencies.”174 Look no further than Philadelphia, where member programs receive food from both SHARE and

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173 Poppendieck, Sweet Charity, 221.
174 Ibid., 225.
Philabundance, resulting in duplicate transportation and overhead costs. While SHARE and Philabundance run efficient and successful programs, when examined in isolation, efficiency is certainly reduced by having two sets of transportation and overhead costs. On a larger scale, Feeding America’s choice system has increased efficiency by allowing individual food banks to request products they need. However, this increased efficiency does not negate the fact that the charitable food system is fundamentally a duplicate food system. “Pantries substitute for supermarkets and corner stores, and soup kitchens serve in lieu of cafeterias.” Unless SNAP benefits are adequately increased or minimum wages and benefits become sufficient, this duplicate network will remain. A second element of inefficiency exists in food recovery. The food recovery effort requires transportation from stores to food banks to feeding programs. However, food recovery does reduce waste and benefit the environment by putting to use food that would otherwise end up in landfills. Thus, some of the inefficiency is arguably offset by environmental benefits.

**Indignity.** Inconvenience and humiliation factors that contribute to “negative experiences of [emergency food] clients are important to the diagnosis of the [system’s] ills.” Like for food secure people, waiting in line for food has an opportunity cost. A difference, however, is that food secure people do not typically worry that the food they are waiting in line for will run out. While this issue remains, the charitable food system has become more dignified. More feeding programs offer larger quantities of food that can be taken home and prepared throughout the week,

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176 Ibid., 228.
rather than requiring food insecure individuals to go to a soup kitchen each night for a meal. In addition, “pay what you can” cafes have emerged that serve individually prepared meals for which customers contribute what they are able. Lastly, choice inherent in social enterprise models are making the charitable food system increasingly similar to the mainstream system. A key improvement will be when stores like Fare and Square provide prepared take-home meals in addition to produce and shelf-safe food, which acknowledges that food insecure individuals, like others, are busy and may not have time to prepare their own meals each day.

Overall, today’s private/public hunger response system based on food banks and a wide network of food and feeding programs has evolved to address many of Poppendieck and Berg’s critiques. While the system may not be ideal, it segregates and stigmatizes food aid to a lesser extent than when the system was first created. And although the traditional soup kitchen model will remain necessary for individuals without a home or kitchen, the future of hunger response seems to include increasing the number of strategically located food pantries (and anti-poverty service offerings within those pantries), social enterprise and a greater focus on food recovery.

FUTURE OF THE 5%

I argue that secondary markets, a form of social enterprise, represent a large area of growth and will increase purchasing power for food insecure individuals. For example, slightly defective produce, which currently goes to food banks or landfills, may have a place in the mainstream system. Brands like Imperfect Produce have created a market for “ugly” fruits and vegetables wherein this second tier produce is
delivered to customers throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Nutritionally, these foods have the same benefits, but cosmetically, they may be misshaped, small, or discolored.¹⁷⁷ Because supermarkets and distributors reject produce with even slight abnormalities, Imperfect Produce is able to source and sell the affordable produce to any consumer, regardless of income level, thus increasing purchasing power without the red tape. Lastly, Imperfect Produce benefits the environment by decreasing the amount of food entering landfills and water waste on food never consumed. Due to the multitude of consumer and environmental benefits along with the profit proposition of creating a market out of something that would otherwise go to waste, there is great potential to scale enterprises like Imperfect Produce throughout the country.

Another way to decrease food waste and increase meals provided by charitable food programs is to employ mobile applications and other technology as a means of increasing food recovery. Saving just 1.1 million of the 52.4 million tons of food that is sent to landfills throughout the United States each year can help nonprofits provide an additional 1.8 billion meals annually.¹⁷⁸ This effort, in addition to requiring tax incentives that motivate food businesses, will require infrastructure (refrigerated trucks, drivers) and logistics (efficiently collecting and distributing recovered food) by food banks, specifically in software that matches surplus with need. Some attempts have been made to create a software in which real time surpluses are matched with volunteer drivers who collect food to deliver to shelters. One such attempt is Food Connect, a phone application in which individuals or businesses in Philadelphia with

eligible foods can schedule a pickup. This type of app addresses a challenge faced by foodbanks whereby small donations are expensive, unreliable and inefficient. If a food bank is able to educate local business about a software, coordinate drivers and routes and direct donations, an app like Food Connect can be scaled to organize recovery of multiple small batches of food along the same route.

It is clear that federal programs have previously and will continue to be the primary and most efficient hunger safety net. Federal nutrition programs provide 95% of all food assistance in the United States. The charitable network is not a substitute for adequate government provision of aid, but it is a necessary supplement that has grown and evolved to meet community needs. The distribution networks food banks have established to support individual feeding programs are engrained in communities and serve a necessary purpose in society. While charitable food organizations may only represent 5% of all food assistance in the United States, it is a critical 5% and one that has great potential for growth in the near future.

THE RISE AND EVOLUTION OF UNITED STATES HUNGER RESPONSE

Poppendieck and Berg made strong arguments in the early days of emergency hunger response that rather than investing more energy into the development of the emergency food system, America should be working to make federal programs more robust. In making those arguments, Poppendieck and Berg acknowledged problems within government programs, but implied that with more funding these problems would be solved. Looking at U.S. hunger response 30 years later, two truths emerge.

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179 “Frequently Asked Questions” Food Connect.
180 Philabundance Advocacy Advisory Council Meeting Materials.
First, despite exponential growth in SNAP funding, food insecurity levels in our society remain high. Second, the political will to address insufficiencies in government programs has proven to be fleeting. Limitations resulting from these two truths make charitable food programs critically important for food insecure individuals.

The enormous expansion and evolution of charitable hunger programs has enabled the system to meet a range of important needs for food insecure individuals that federal programs do not even try to meet. Among these needs are community building, empowerment and development of social enterprises that expand choice and purchasing power in a variety of ways. Throughout the co-evolution of federal and charitable anti-hunger systems, it has become increasingly clear that many people who are food insecure need both.

It is within our control to learn how efficacy of private programs can be increased while also pushing for expansion of federal programs. This thesis is a preliminary effort to suggest that the magnitude and significance of the work being done within the charitable food system, especially as it interacts with both government and business, deserves further examination. Although substantial progress has been made, there are still deficiencies. To truly measure the extent to which programs within America’s public/private hunger response network empower recipients, distribute healthy food and meet the extensive food need requires innovating the methods used to define and measure that need. While this thesis proves that progress has been made in the right direction and that public and private responses together address food insecurity better than either entity would alone, both sectors must continue innovating and mobilizing food resources to narrow the Meal Gap in the United States for good.
# APPENDIX

## GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
<th>Moms and Kids</th>
<th>Fostering Nutrition</th>
<th>Senior Hunger</th>
<th>Supplies Food Banks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SNAP</td>
<td>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program</td>
<td>Provides timely, targeted and temporary benefits for low-income Americans to buy groceries.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEFAP</td>
<td>The Emergency Food Assistance Program</td>
<td>Provides USDA commodities to those in need of short-term hunger relief through food banks.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSFP</td>
<td>Commodity Supplemental Food Program</td>
<td>Provides food assistance to low-income seniors through a monthly package of healthy USDA commodities.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CACFP</td>
<td>Child and Adult Care Food Program</td>
<td>Provides nutritious meals and snacks to children and adults in designated care centers.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSLP</td>
<td>National School Lunch Program</td>
<td>Provides a nutritionally balanced lunch to qualifying children on each school day.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBP</td>
<td>School Breakfast Program</td>
<td>Provides a nutritionally balanced breakfast to qualifying children on each school day.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFSP</td>
<td>Summer Food Service Program</td>
<td>Provides free meals and snacks to low-income children during the summer months.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIC</td>
<td>Women, Infants and Children</td>
<td>Provides nutritious foods and nutrition education for low-income, at risk women, infants and children.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHARITABLE RESPONSE OPERATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provider</td>
<td>A non-profit organization that collects food to store and later distribute to a network of grassroots organizations. Food may be donated, recovered, purchased, or received from government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Bank</td>
<td>Distributes groceries for preparation in a client's home. Agencies must have an indoor location, dry storage and ideally regular weekly hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Pantry</td>
<td>Distributed groceries for preparation in a client’s home. The food is distributed the same day it is picked up or delivered, so agencies may or may not have an indoor location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soup Kitchen</td>
<td>Prepares and serves meals to clients, ideally during regular weekly hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>Prepares and serves one or more meals per day to clients who live in the shelter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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181 Definitions taken from Feeding America.
182 Definitions taken from Philabundance.
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