



Rethinking Food Charity: A Community Conversation

Service Provider
Survey Results



About this Survey

This survey is the start of an 8-month project to scope out the future of emergency or community food services in Newfoundland and Labrador. To better understand the current landscape, we asked people who are involved as volunteers, employees, or board members with any type of emergency or community food services to complete a survey. We received a total of 63 responses from service providers across the province. The purpose of this survey analysis is to help us identify the most valuable topics for the rest of the Rethinking Food Charity process.

Summary: What We Heard from Service Providers

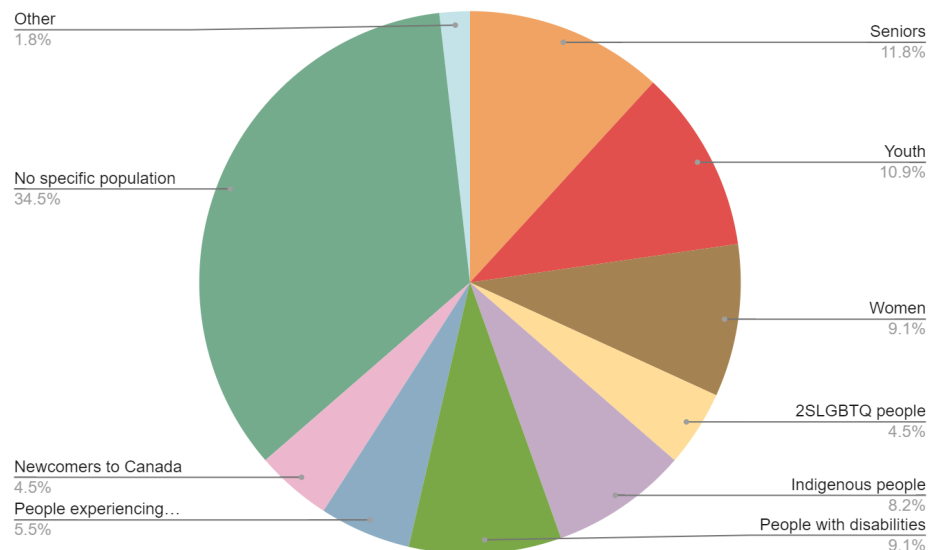
- ❖ Over 50% of community food organizations support anyone that is looking for support in their area, rather than supporting a specific sub-population.
- ❖ The most frequently supported specific populations include seniors, youth, women, and individuals with disabilities.
- ❖ Food programs that distribute food hampers are the most commonly operated food program in the province, followed by food banks and meal or snack programs.
- ❖ Almost 90% of all service providers strongly agreed that they can ensure clients do not feel stigma or shame when they access support.
- ❖ Nearly half of all responding service providers feel as though it is not their place to advocate for policy changes that would reduce the demand for their food program.
- ❖ 60% of all food programs already have a “no questions asked” policy with clients, which means they do not require information about their usage of other food programs or proof of income.
- ❖ When it comes to moving to a grocery store model of operation where clients can choose their own food items from the shelves, the majority of service providers want to do this but lack the resources to do so.
- ❖ More than 50% of service providers feel that food programs should also help clients with barriers outside of food access (e.g., housing, mental health, etc.), that food programs can be doing more to advocate for systemic change, and that clients should have more choice when accessing food services.
- ❖ Over 80% of service providers think that food programs should be working collaboratively.
- ❖ Almost half of all service providers said that the primary gap in the emergency or community food sector is the lack of funding, infrastructure, and resources available to food programs.

First, we wanted to know about the specific populations that emergency or community food programs support.

Over 50% of responding organizations reported supporting no particular population, indicating that they support anyone that needs support in their geographical area, rather than supporting a specific sub-population. The most commonly supported specific populations include seniors, youth, women, and people with disabilities. Less than 10% of respondents reported specifically supporting Indigenous peoples, people experiencing homelessness, 2SLGBTQ people, newcomers to Canada, and 'Other' (which was reported to be school-aged children).

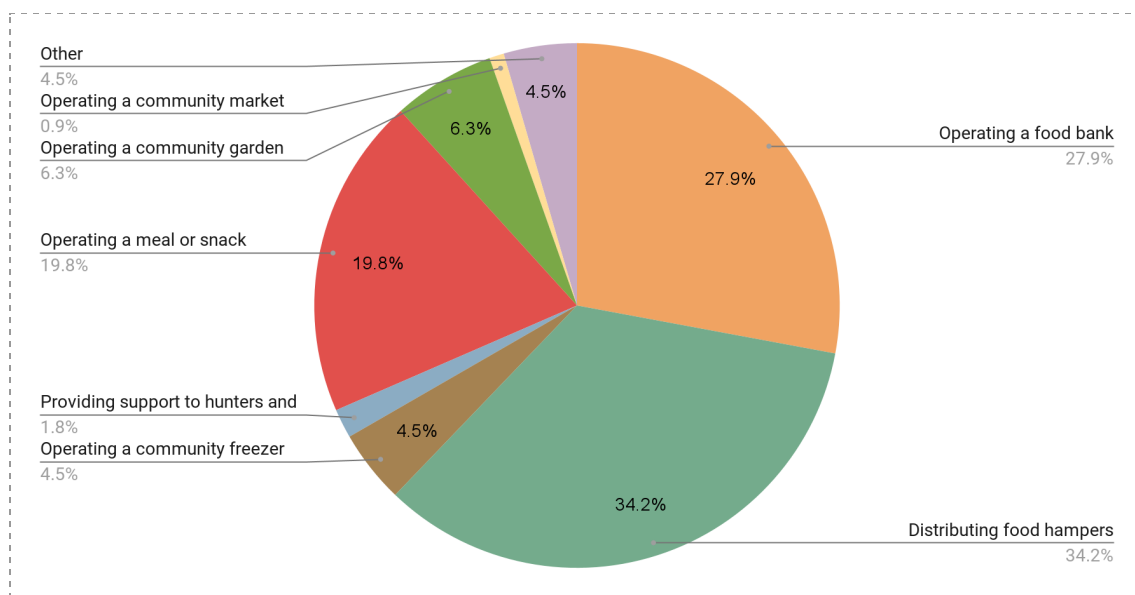
Specific Populations Supported by Service Providers	
No specific population	39 (61.9%)
Seniors	13 (20.6%)
Youth	12 (19.1%)
Women	10 (15.9%)
People with disabilities	10 (15.9%)
Indigenous people	9 (9.5%)
People experiencing homelessness	6 (9.5%)
2SLGBTQ people	5 (7.9%)
Newcomers to Canada	5 (7.9%)
Other	1 (1.6%)

*respondents were able to choose more than one



Next, we wanted to know what sorts of food programs are operated by the service providers in our province.

Providers were asked to identify all programs they may offer. More than one-third of respondents distribute food hampers to clients. Operating a food bank and meal/ snack program are the next most common food programs. Community gardens are run by 6.3% of service providers. Less than 5% of responding service providers report operating a community freezer, community market, support for hunters and gatherers, and 'Other' (which was reported as either supplying gift cards, meals, food deliveries, and taxis, or supplying low-income women and families with grocery gift cards).



In this section, we asked some basic questions to get a sense of how effectively service providers feel they can do their work right now.

Service providers responded to several “We can” statements to indicate how effectively they feel their food program can currently operate. A scale from 1 - 10 (1 = Strongly disagree; 10 = Strongly agree) was used, and ‘N/A’ was selected if they felt the statement did not apply to their program. The averages only include 1-10 responses.

a. We can meet the volume of demand we are currently experiencing

Average = 6.85

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree				
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9.5%	1.6%	1.6%	7.9%	3.2%	12.7%	9.5%	7.9%	22.2%	11.1%	12.7%

On average, service providers neither agree nor disagree that they can meet their current volume of demand, though most tend to agree that they can.

b. We can provide a diverse variety of nutritious foods

Average = 6.58

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree				
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7.9%	1.6%	0%	6.3%	4.8%	27%	7.9%	11.1%	11.1%	7.9%	14.3%

In general, service providers somewhat agree that they can provide a diverse variety of nutritious foods to clients. This is likely due to the fact that most, if not all, emergency or community food programs rely heavily on food donations. And, more recently, the increase in food prices has likely caused donations for food programs to slow, leaving service providers with no choice but to purchase food themselves. In a nutshell, food programs can only provide clients with the food they have available to them at the time; whether it is a diverse variety of nutritious foods depends largely on the current donations and the foods they can afford to purchase.

c. We can ensure clients do not feel stigma or shame when they access support

Average = 9.02

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree				
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.2%	1.6%	11.1%	11.1%	12.7%	57.1%

Here, responses ranged from 5-10, with over half of all service providers strongly agreeing that they can ensure clients do not feel stigma or shame when accessing support.

d. We can provide support for folks with specific dietary needs (e.g., vegetarian, gluten-free, halal, etc.)

Average = 5.78

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree				
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9.5%	6.3%	7.9%	3.2%	7.9%	15.9%	15.9%	12.7%	3.2%	4.8%	12.7%

On average, service providers neither agree nor disagree that that they can provide support for clients with specific dietary needs. Similar to providing a diverse range of nutritious foods, dietary and culturally-appropriate foods are only available at food programs when they are donated.

e. We can reach clients who cannot physically access our space

Average = 7.56

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree				
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9.5%	0%	6.3%	1.6%	3.2%	11.1%	4.8%	9.5%	12.7%	7.9%	33.3%

Though responses ranged from 2-10, most service providers agree that they can reach clients who cannot physically access their space. Exactly one-third of service providers strongly agree that they can reach these clients, which is likely because their food program provides delivery and/or mail-out services.

f. We can change the way we work to adapt to changing community needs or public health requirements

Average = 7.82

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree					
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6.3%	0%	0%	0%	4.8%	12.7%	4.8%	12.7%	17.5%	17.5%	23.8%

Naturally, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, most service providers either agree or strongly agree that they can change the way they work to adapt to changing public health requirements or community needs.

g. We can connect clients with other supports (e.g., mental health programs, income support, housing, etc.)

Average = 6.94

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree					
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
14.3%	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	14.3%	6.3%	7.9%	9.5%	15.9%	17.5%

Though most service providers strongly agree that they can connect clients with other supports such as mental health, income, or housing support, on average, service providers only partially agree they can do so. This range of responses likely reflects the wide range of food programs that exist in our province. For example, food banks or meal and snack programs may solely operate to provide clients with food, whereas larger service centers or non-profit organizations have the means to also offer resources and referrals. It is also probable that there are fewer support programs for individuals living in rural and remote areas of the province, which make it difficult to connect them with other supports aside from food.

h. We can connect with other food programs to share ideas and best practices

Average = 6.44

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree				
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
14.3%	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	3.2%	12.7%	7.9%	15.9%	9.5%	9.5%	17.5%

Although most service providers strongly agree that they can connect with other food programs to share ideas and best practices, many service providers strongly disagree or feel that they only have a limited ability to do this. This may reflect the stark difference between living in urban versus rural areas. Food programs operating in rural or remote areas are likely the only ones of their kind in the geographic area, making it difficult to connect with other food programs.

i. We can fundraise effectively through cash donations

Average = 5.95

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree				
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
30.2%	3.2%	6.3%	6.3%	3.2%	11.1%	6.3%	4.8%	14.3%	7.9%	4.8%

Majority of service providers at least somewhat agree that they can fundraise effectively through cash donations. The high rate of 'N/A' responses indicates that many food programs likely do not accept cash donations.

j. We can fundraise effectively through food donations

Average = 6.00

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree				
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
23.8%	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	1.6%	15.9%	11.1%	11.1%	7.9%	7.9%	4.8%

Here, service providers neither agree nor disagree that food donations are an effective means of fundraising. Given the increasingly rising food prices and cost of living, food programs that accept food donations are likely seeing a decline in supply. With food and living costs rising and food donations decreasing, food programs may be more likely to purchase food for their programs themselves, which would explain why cash donations were reportedly a more effective way to fundraise.

k. We can fundraise effectively through funding programs

Average = 6.83

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree				
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11.1%	3.2%	1.6%	3.2%	4.8%	17.5%	6.3%	7.9%	17.5%	15.9%	9.5%

On average, service providers feel that they can somewhat effectively fundraise through funding programs. Most frequently, they either agree or somewhat agree with this statement. The varying range of responses here is likely due to differing awareness of the funding programs available to food programs.

l. We can recruit staff

Average = 6.08

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree				
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
58.7%	1.6%	0%	7.9%	1.6%	6.3%	4.8%	3.2%	7.9%	3.2%	3.2%

Judging from the large percentage of 'N/A' responses, it is likely that the majority of food programs do not recruit staff and instead rely on volunteers. On average, service providers tend to somewhat agree that they can recruit staff, with the majority split between agreeing and disagreeing with this statement.

m. We can recruit volunteers

Average = 6.81

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree				
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12.7%	3.2%	1.6%	9.5%	4.8%	6.3%	9.5%	14.3%	14.3%	3.2%	20.6%

In contrast to recruiting staff, most service providers strongly agree that they can recruit volunteers. Though, with responses ranging from 1-10, this is certainly not the case for all food programs. On average, service providers only somewhat agree they can recruit volunteers.

- n. We can advocate for policy changes that would reduce demand for our organization’s services (e.g., higher minimum wages, higher-income support rates, basic income, etc.)

Average = **6.03**

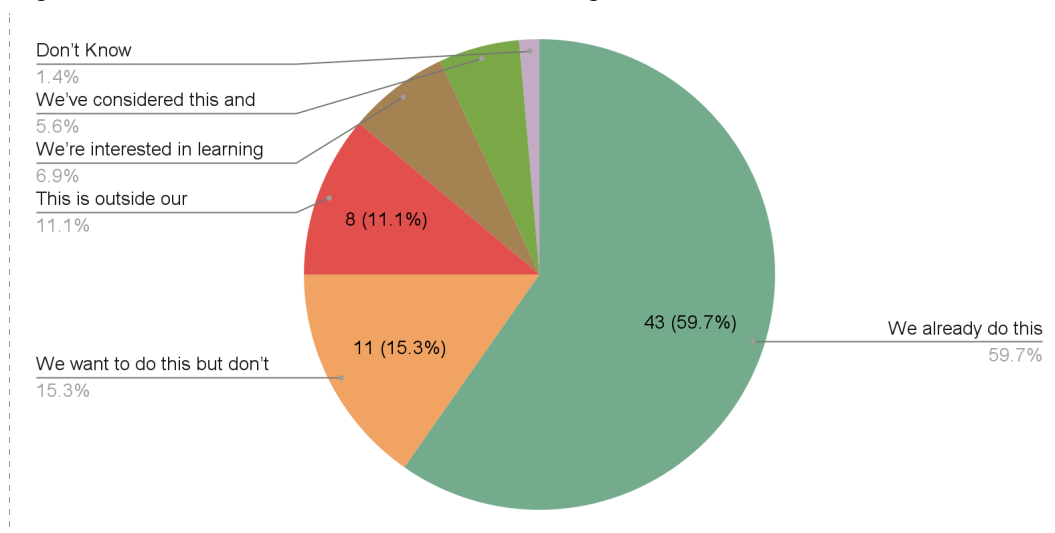
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree					
N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
44.4%	3.2%	1.6%	3.2%	1.6%	14.3%	4.8%	9.5%	1.6%	6.3%	7.9%

In general, service providers somewhat agree that they can advocate for policy changes to reduce demand for their organization’s services. Interestingly, this statement received a high number of ‘N/A’ responses. This indicates that nearly half of all responding service providers feel as though it is not their place to advocate for policy changes that would reduce demand for their food program. Based on the range of responses, food programs seem to differ widely in their agreement with this statement.

Here, we asked some questions to better understand how, or if, service providers are using specific practices in their food programs.

a. Delivery of food hampers and/or gift cards

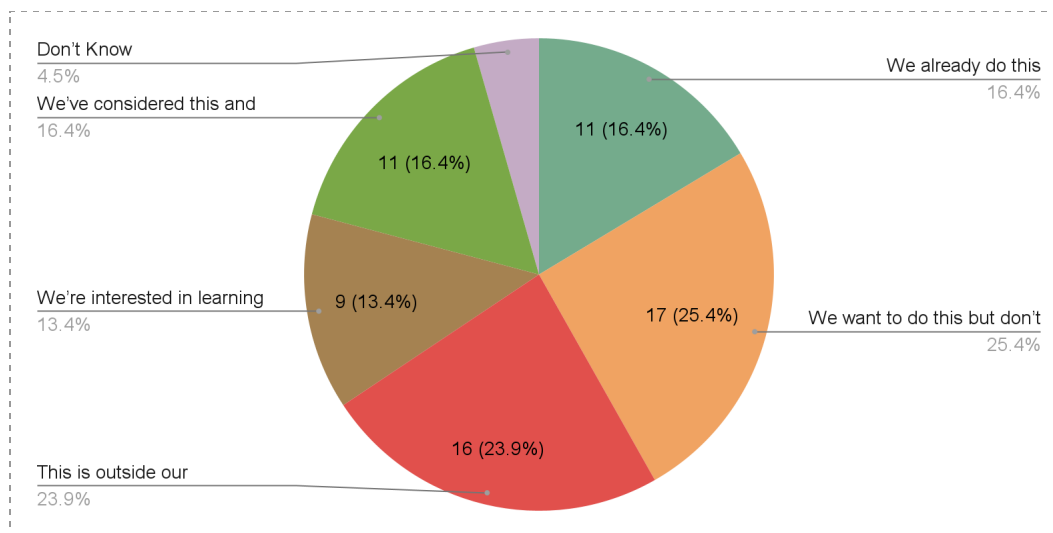
Over half of all food programs are delivering food hampers, gift cards, or both. Some report that they want to do this but do not have the resources to do so (e.g., limited staff, volunteers, budget, etc.). Other service providers feel that delivering food hampers or gift cards is outside their organization’s current scope of work. Less than 10% of respondents were either interested in learning more about this, or have considered doing it and decided not to.



Responses	
We already do this	43 (59.7%)
We want to do this but do not have the resources	11 (15.3%)
This is outside our organization's scope of work as we currently see it	8 (11.1%)
We are interested in learning more about this	5 (6.9%)
We have considered this and decided not to do it	4 (5.6%)
Don't know	1 (1.4%)

b. Moving to a “grocery store” model where clients choose their own items from the shelves instead of receiving a premade hamper

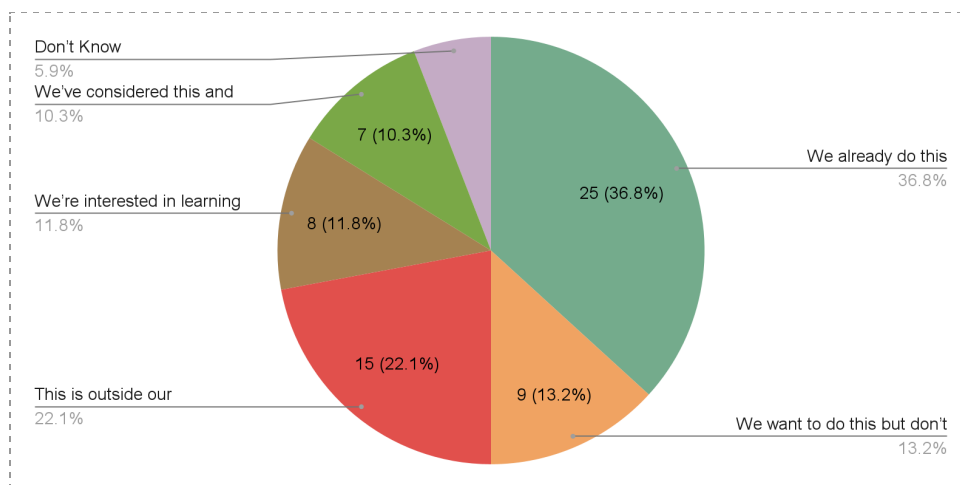
When it comes to moving to a “grocery store” model of operation, the majority of service providers want to do so but do not have the resources, and nearly just as many feel this would be outside of their organization’s scope of work. Less than 20% of respondents have either already implemented a “grocery store” model, or considered it and decided not to, and others are interested in learning more about the “grocery store” model of operation.



Responses	
We already do this	11 (16.4%)
We want to do this but do not have the resources	17 (25.4%)
This is outside our organization’s scope of work as we currently see it	16 (23.9%)
We are interested in learning more about this	9 (13.4%)
We have considered this and decided not to do it	11 (16.4%)
Don't know	3 (4.5%)

c. Providing gift cards or cash transfers instead of food

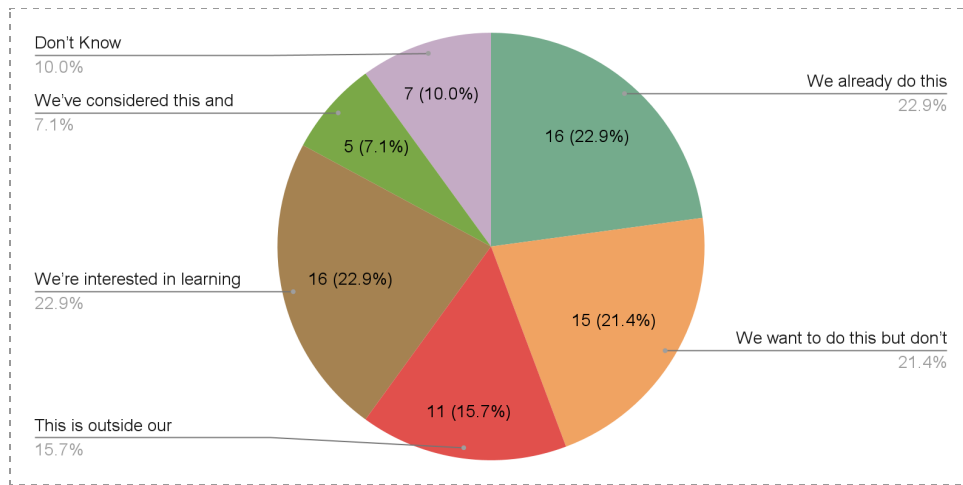
Over one-third of service providers are already providing gift cards or cash transfers instead of food, while more than one-fifth believe this is outside their organization’s scope of work. Others want to do this but likely do not have the financial resources to do so. The minority of respondents have considered providing gift cards or cash transfers instead of food, but have chosen not to do it.



Responses	
We already do this	25 (36.8%)
We want to do this but do not have the resources	9 (13.2%)
This is outside our organization’s scope of work as we currently see it	15 (22.1%)
We are interested in learning more about this	8 (11.8%)
We have considered this and decided not to do it	7 (10.3%)
Don't know	4 (5.9%)

d. Including wild game and/or gathered foods in food hampers

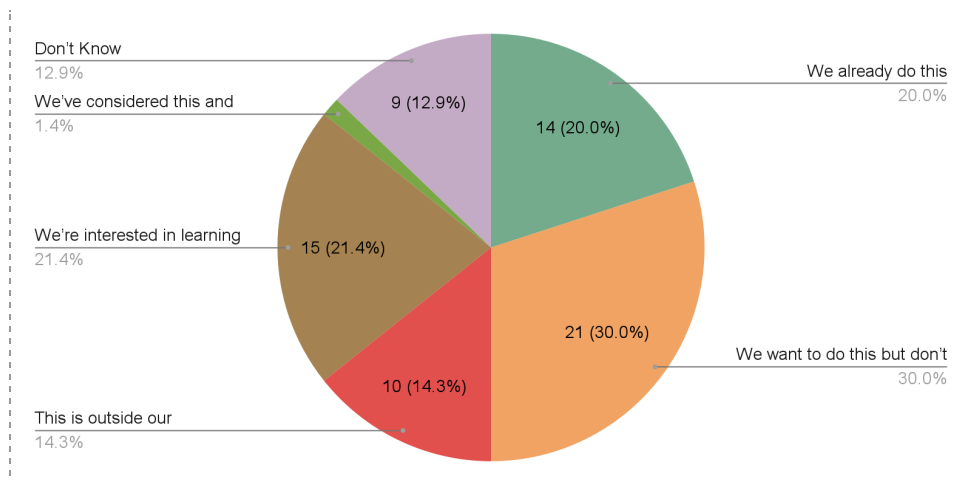
The majority of food programs either already include wild game and/or gathered foods in their food hampers, or are interested in learning more about how to do this. Many others would like to provide hampers with wild game or gathered foods but lack the resources needed to do so (e.g., limited or no freezer or refrigeration space). Of the minority, less than 20% feel that this is outside their program’s scope of work, and less than 10% have considered it and decided not to do it.



Responses	
We already do this	16 (22.9%)
We want to do this but do not have the resources	15 (21.4%)
This is outside our organization’s scope of work as we currently see it	11 (15.7%)
We are interested in learning more about this	16 (22.9%)
We have considered this and decided not to do it	5 (7.1%)
Don't know	7 (10%)

e. Providing culturally appropriate foods

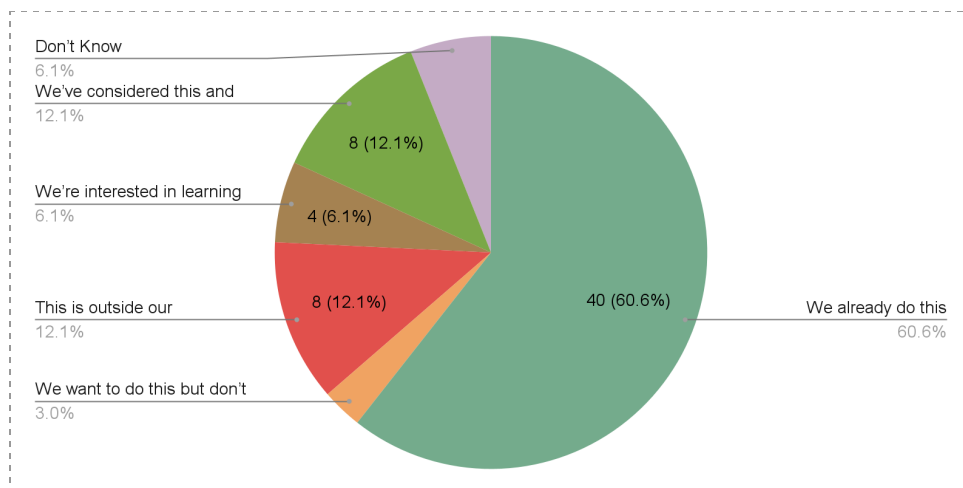
Most service providers want to provide culturally appropriate foods to their clients, but do not have the resources to do so (e.g., lack of cultural food donations, limited financial resources, etc.). Slightly more than one-fifth of service providers are interested in learning more about providing culturally appropriate foods, and exactly one-fifth of service providers already do this. Less than 15% of respondents report that: 1) this is outside the scope of their program’s work, 2) they are unsure about doing this, or 3) they have considered doing this but decided not to



Responses	
We already do this	14 (20%)
We want to do this but do not have the resources	21 (30%)
This is outside our organization’s scope of work as we currently see it	10 (14.3%)
We are interested in learning more about this	15 (21.4%)
We have considered this and decided not to do it	1 (1.4%)
Don't know	9 (12.9%)

f. “No questions asked” policies with clients - not asking for information about their income or usage of other food programs

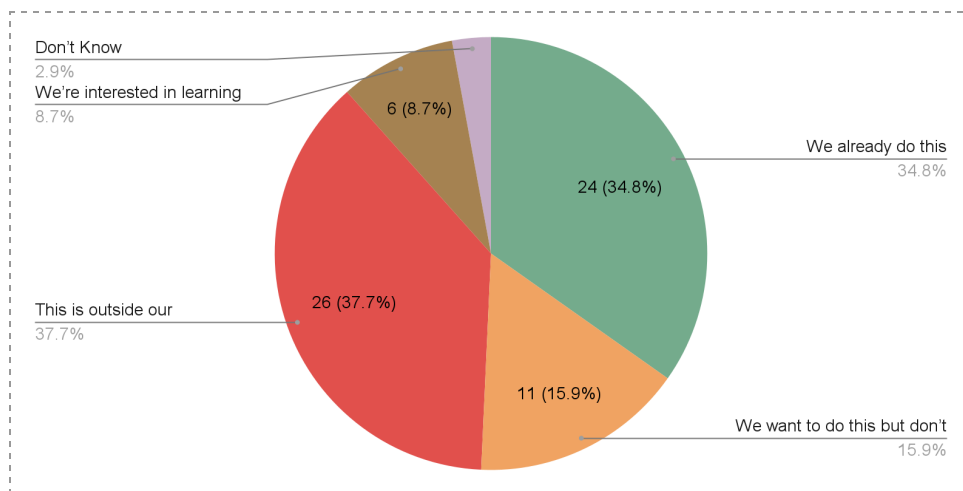
Over half of all food programs are already using a “no questions asked” policy with their clients. Some feel as though doing this is outside their program’s scope of work, or they have considered implementing this policy and decided against it. Others are interested in learning more about a “no questions asked” policy, or want to incorporate one into their program but lack the resources.



Responses	
We already do this	40 (60.6%)
We want to do this but do not have the resources	2 (3%)
This is outside our organization’s scope of work as we currently see it	8 (12.1%)
We are interested in learning more about this	4 (6.1%)
We have considered this and decided not to do it	8 (12.1%)
Don't know	4 (6.1%)

g. Providing "all-encompassing" supports that help clients meet their needs in other areas (i.e., mental health, housing, etc.)

Almost 40% of service providers feel that providing "all-encompassing" support to clients is outside their organization's scope of work as they currently see it. In contrast, almost equally as many respondents are already providing these "all-encompassing" supports to help their clients meet their needs in areas other than food. Some service providers are interested in learning more about doing this, and others would like to offer these supports but lack the proper resources to do so.

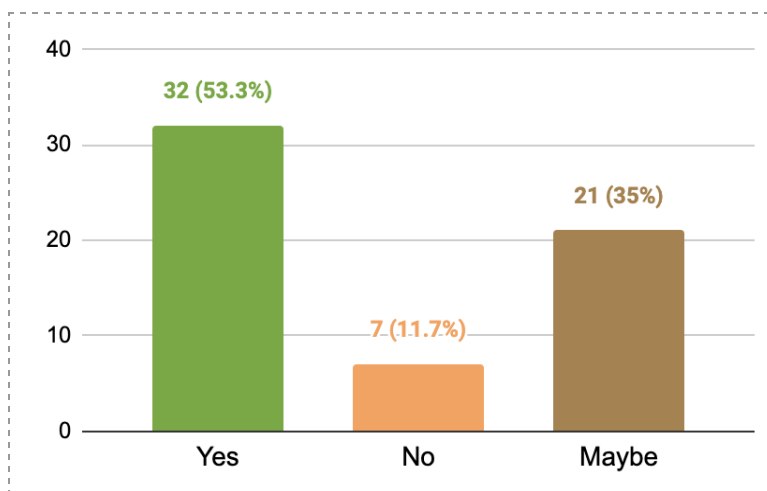


Responses	
We already do this	24 (34.8%)
We want to do this but do not have the resources	11 (15.9%)
This is outside our organization's scope of work as we currently see it	26 (37.7%)
We are interested in learning more about this	6 (8.7%)
We have considered this and decided not to do it	0 (0%)
Don't know	2 (2.9%)

Next, we wanted to understand service providers' thoughts on how they think emergency or community food programs should be operating in general.

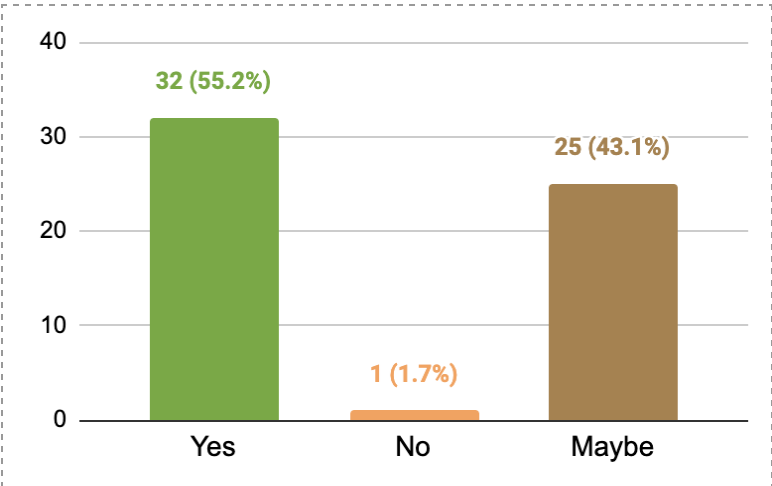
- a. Food programs should also help users with barriers outside of food access (e.g., unemployment, housing, etc.)

Over half of all service providers think that food programs should also help clients with barriers outside of food access. Just over 10% disagreed with this statement, and over one-third reported that maybe food programs should be helping clients with barriers outside of food access.



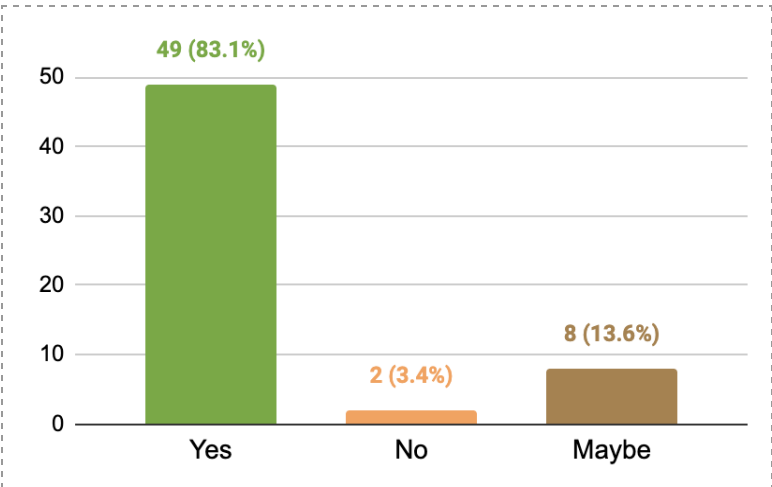
- b. Food programs can be doing more to advocate for systemic change

When it comes to food programs advocating for systemic change, the majority of service providers felt that this is something they should be doing. Close to half thought that food programs should maybe be doing this, and only one respondent felt that advocating for systemic change should not be done by food programs.



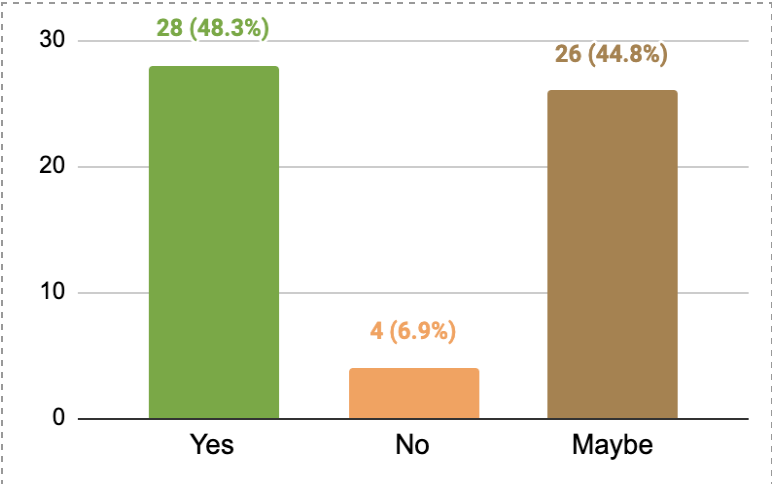
c. Food programs should be working collaboratively

Over 80% of service providers feel as though food programs should be working collaboratively, and more than 10% feel that collaboration is possibly something that they should be doing. Only a handful of respondents believe that food programs should not be working collaboratively.



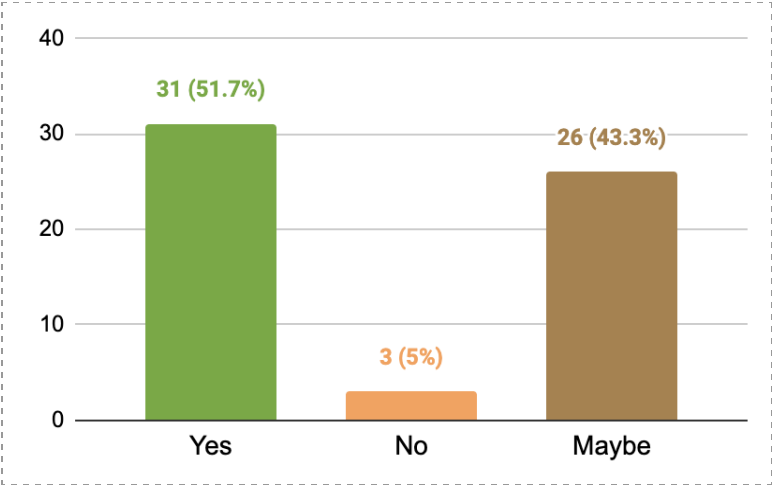
d. Service users should have more autonomy and/or choice when accessing emergency services

The vast majority of service providers feel that clients either definitely or maybe should have more autonomy or choice when accessing emergency food services. A minority of respondents disagreed with this statement.



e. There should be a nutritional standard for all food given out by food programs

Just over half of all respondents believe that there should be a nutritional standard for the food given out by food programs, and many others feel that this is maybe something that should be done. Only 5% of service providers did not think there should be a nutritional standard when it comes to the food at food programs.



Finally, we wondered if service providers saw any gaps in the current model of emergency or community food services.

We asked respondents whether they see any gaps in emergency or community food services as they exist right now, such as infrastructure, capacity, or funding. Some service providers gave multiple gaps so responses were themed and are presented below.

Perceived Gaps in the Emergency or Community Food Sector	
Lack of funding, infrastructure, or resources	38 (48.7%)
Low quality food / Lack of food or healthy food	12 (15.4%)
Lack of volunteers or support to run food programs	8 (10.3%)
High prices of food	4 (5.1%)
Lack of communication between organizations	4 (5.1%)
Food insecurity or cultural insecurity	3 (3.8%)
Lack of transparency or equality	2 (2.6%)
Lack of transportation or accessibility	2 (2.6%)
Lack of UBI, mental health, health, and housing services	2 (2.6%)
Lack of education or awareness	2 (2.6%)
No problems or gaps	1 (1.3%)

The primary gap identified by service providers is the lack of funding, infrastructure, and resources available for food programs. Nearly half of all service providers mentioned this gap, which is likely a reflection of the large proportion of food services that operate solely on food or cash donations, volunteers, and are restricted by their current infrastructure (e.g., lack of refrigeration means restricting the foods they accept and purchase).

Another reported gap was the quality or lack of food. Specifically, 15% of service providers referenced being restricted to food that is of low quality or insufficient quantity. The lack of healthy food at food programs was also pointed out by respondents, and 10% of service providers noted that they see a lack of volunteers or support for running food programs as a gap

Finally, some respondents reported that the rising cost of food and the rising rates of food insecurity or cultural insecurity are the gaps that they see in the emergency or community food sector. Others mentioned that this sector is affected by the lack of communication between organizations, transportation or accessibility, mental health, health, and housing services, a Universal Basic Income, and education or awareness. Significantly, only one respondent saw no problems or gaps in the current model of emergency or community food services.