

UNDERSTANDING THE FACES OF HUNGER IN PHILADELPHIA

Mayor's Internship Program, 2015

1 | Understanding the Faces of Hunger

Research Team

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Farhana is pursuing a dual-degree master's in Public Policy and Business Administration at the University of Michigan. After graduation, she hopes to work at the intersection of the public and private sector and is interested in nonprofit consulting and social enterprises.

Adam Cohen | University of Pennsylvania, 2016 | B.A. Urban Studies | Philadelphia City Planning Commission
As a student at Penn, Adam is a University Scholar, serves as the Chair of the Student Advisory Board for the Netter Center for Community Partnerships, and coordinates College Access and Career Readiness programs in West Philadelphia public high schools. After graduating, he hopes to pursue a career related to urban education, community development, and/or urban planning.

Brittany Gardner | Charlotte School of Law, 2015 | Juris Doctorate | Department of Commerce, Office of Economic Opportunity

Brittany is a graduate from Temple University, possessing a B.A. in English, and a minor in Sociology. Currently, Brittany is a third year law student at Charlotte School of law. After graduation, she intends to sit for the Pennsylvania Bar exam and practice Criminal Law.

Adina Goldstein | University of Pennsylvania 2017 | B.A. in Political Science and Urban Education | Office of Leadership Investment

Adina is a rising junior at Penn, majoring in Political Science and minoring in Urban Education. She is also part of the Civic Scholars Program, a four year academic experience that concentrates on scholarship and civic engagement. After graduating, Adina will be matriculating into Penn's Graduate School of Education to pursue an M.S. Ed in Elementary Education. Adina is involved in a variety of on campus clubs and student groups including Penn's Jewish a cappella group, the Shabbatoners, Penn's Tzedek Social Justice Committee and regularly volunteers with Lea Elementary School's after school music program.

Emily Irani | University of Pennsylvania, 2017 | B.A. Philosophy, Politics and Economics, Minor in Consumer Psychology | Department of Commerce, Office of Economic Opportunity

Emily is a rising junior at the University of Pennsylvania. She is very politically active on Penn's campus, as she created her own organization called Penn for Hillary and is readily involved with Penn Democrats. She is also involved in a variety of student organizations, including Zeta Tau Alpha, College Cognoscenti and the PPE Undergraduate Advisory Board. After graduating, she hopes to take a gap year to either work or travel and then attend law school to get her JD .

Ana Koerner | University of Pittsburgh 2017 | B.A. Urban Studies and Spanish | Department of Behavioral Health
In addition to her studies, Ana also writes for an intersectional feminist publication on campus, coaches after-school soccer, and works at a local restaurant. She is passionate about a variety of social issues, such as women's rights, education reform and immigrant affairs to name a few. In the future, she hopes to use her experience from the Mayor's Internship Program as well as from the University of Pittsburgh to pursue a career that can affect social change in these areas.

Adrianna Rosario | Wellesley College, 2017 | B.A Political Science, Minor in Economics | Commerce Department, Office of Economic Opportunity

Adrianna is a rising junior at Wellesley College. She is on the Varsity Soccer Team, Treasurer of Wellesley's Literary Society and an active member of the Mission Hill After School Program serving underprivileged teenagers in South Boston. After graduation, Adrianna wants to combine her passions for research and social justice issues by working for a progressive think tank or political consulting firm. Eventually, Adrianna is considering getting a J.D or M.P.A to further her career in these areas.

Mariah Wozniak | Virginia Tech, 2016 | B.A. Political Science, B.A. Public and Urban Affairs; Minor in Leadership and Social Change | Managing Director's Office, Philly311

Mariah is a rising senior involved in various clubs and student organizations on campus, including Sigma Kappa Sorority and Student Government Association. Upon graduation, she plans to work in government or the private sector before pursuing a graduate degree.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through the Mayor's Internship Program (MIP), a group of 8 interns worked throughout the summer- from June-July 2015- to collect survey data for the Food Access Collaborative. This survey was conducted with meal guests at free indoor and outdoor meal sites through Center City, Philadelphia. A total of 239 surveys were conducted and this report summarizes the preparation, implementation, and data of the 2015 Guest Survey.

There were many challenges that the MIP team faced during the surveying process. This process required constant feedback as meal times, locations, and providers were constantly being updated for the Food Access Collaborative's database. Since this is the third year of the Guest Survey, the MIP team provided data analysis as well as recommendations on how to improve both survey design and implementation.

BACKGROUND

Food Access Collaborative (FAC)

Mayor Nutter established the FAC through an executive order in December 2012 as a coalition of city officials, community leaders, volunteers, emergency meal providers and their guests who together seek to increase the city's capacity to provide free meals and other social services to Philadelphians in need. The FAC's has focused on three key activities:

- Increasing the number of meals available in a safe and dignified setting until it addresses current need;
- Improving connections to social and health services for meal guests;
- Improving the health and nutrition of meals served.

Current Research

The FAC created this specific intern research project to better understand hunger in Philadelphia through face-to-face interviews with meal guests at indoor and outdoor emergency free meal sites. The primary goals of our research were: to collect demographic information about people attending free meals; understand why individuals seek free meals; and learn what additional services are necessary to alleviate dependence on free meals.

This year marks the third summer that interns have conducted guest surveys at meal sites. This report of our findings will be presented to the Food Access Collaborative director in order to inform future goals concerning meal expansion, social service outreach, and potential partnerships.

METHODS

General Information and Procedure

Over a seven-week period (June 8th until July 24th), our team surveyed 239 meal guests. This survey was already created by the FAC in conjunction with the Yale Consultation Center. All interviews were conducted privately and we did not ask meal guests for their names. As an incentive, guests were given two SEPTA tokens for participating. We primarily surveyed at outdoor locations on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and Love Park; however, when we were unable to find a meal provider, we visited indoor sites.

Meal Scheduling

The following is the most reliable schedule our team could create regarding when and where meal providers are present in the city. We found that the original schedule we received was slightly inaccurate and thus unreliable, therefore we thought it would be best to create a new schedule representing the times and locations of meal providers we pinpointed over our seven weeks. We considered this the first step towards creating a more efficient and streamlined meal surveying process.

| Summer 2015 Weekday Emergency Meal Times and Locations | | | | | |
|--|--|---|-------------------------------|---|--|
| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
| Lunch | | | St. John's Hospice 10:30AM | St. John's Hospice 10:30 AM | |
| Dinner | Philly Restart Family Court 4-5PM | Sunday Breakfast 6:30 PM | | Five Barley Loaves Outreach Family Court 4:30PM | |
| | Sunday Breakfast (302 N 13 th St) 4-5 PM | | | Sunday Breakfast 4:30-5:30 PM | Sunday Breakfast 6:15-7:15 |
| | Urban Hope/Truck Club Love Park 8PM | Montgomery Korean Church Family Court 7PM | | Ian'Yae's In Touch Free Library 7PM | Mathematics, Civics and Charter School Love Park 8PM |

RESULTS

Survey responses provided our team with a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data that help us better understand free meal guests and to better identify existing gaps in social services. The following is brief snapshot of the data that was collected through our surveying.

Demographics

Of the 239 surveys conducted, the respondents were disproportionately male and African-American. The age of our guests seemed to follow a somewhat normal distribution with the mode being between 50 and 54 years of age. The gender, age, and ethnicity representation of our respondents is shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3.

GENDER OF MEAL GUESTS

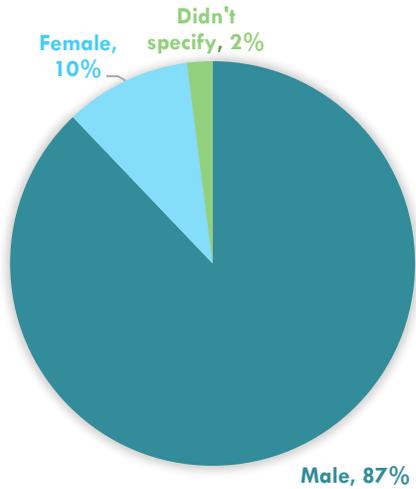


FIGURE 1

AGE OF MEAL GUESTS

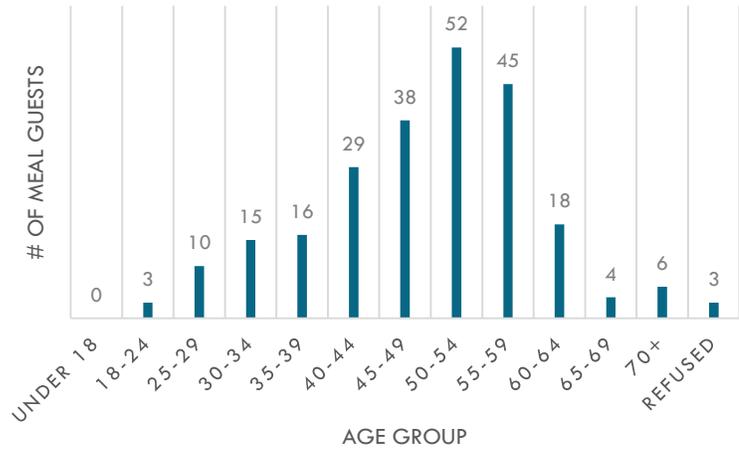


FIGURE 2

ETHNICITY OF MEAL GUESTS

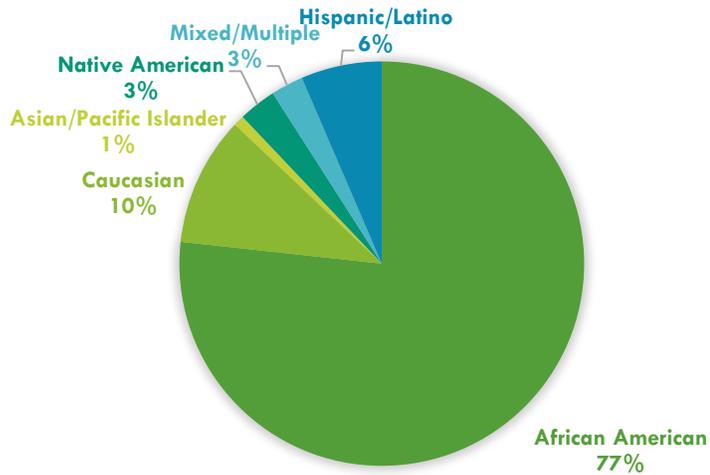


FIGURE 3

Housing

Of all meal guests surveyed, only 1 indicated that he did not reside in Philadelphia full-time. Although all free meal sites were located in Center City, only 52% of guests would be sleeping in Center City on the night they were surveyed. This implies that many guests travel to Center City in order to receive services such as free meals. In terms of where guests would be sleeping, a wide variety of responses were recorded with most guests indicating “sidewalk/car/park/abandoned building.” This response was likely disproportionately high due to the time of year that surveys

were conducted. Figure 4 represents where guests would be staying on the night the survey was conducted. Also, of all respondents, the average amount of time living on the streets and/or in an emergency shelter in the past year was 30 weeks.

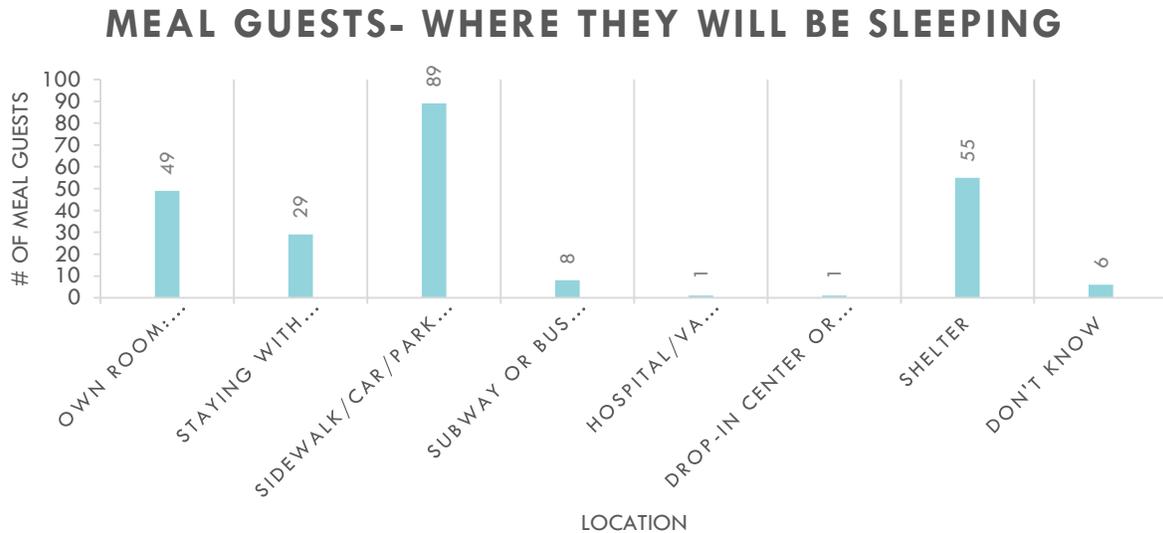


FIGURE 4

Health

On a scale of “Excellent” to “Poor,” most guests’ perceptions of their physical health and mental and emotional health followed very similar distributions with “Good” being the most common response and “fair” being the second most common response in each category. Figures 5 and 6 represent guests’ perceptions of their health.

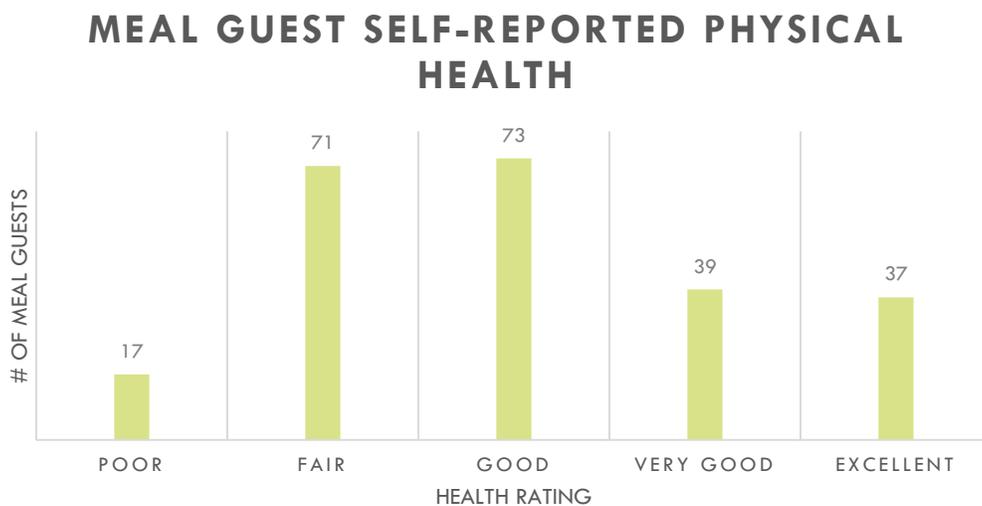


FIGURE 5

MEAL GUEST SELF-REPORTED MENTAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH



FIGURE 6

In terms of chronic health conditions, guests responded as shown in Figure 7. The most prevalent chronic health condition was “high blood pressure/high cholesterol/hypertension. Other chronic health conditions reported include depression, HIV, glaucoma, schizophrenia, arthritis, cancer, and migraines.

MEAL GUEST CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

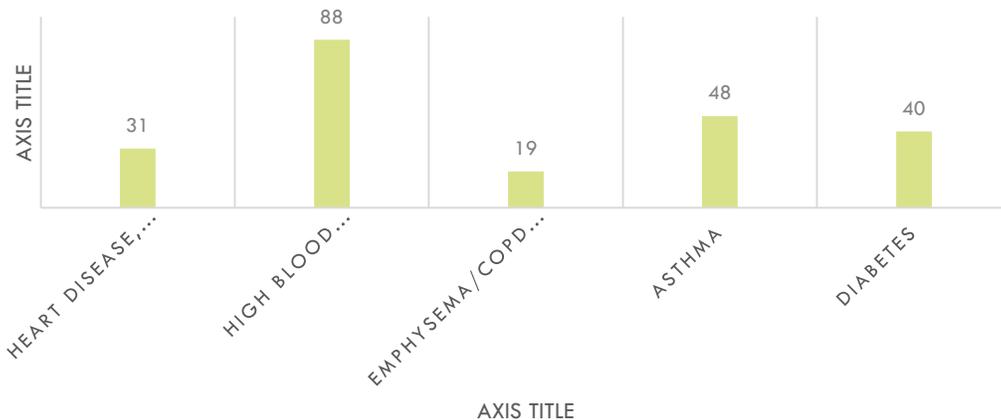


FIGURE 7

Since indoor surveys were only conducted when there were scheduling issues, we only had 40 indoor surveys compared to 199 outdoor surveys. While number of indoor surveys is quite small compared to number of outdoor surveys, it is still large enough to analyze. One of the original hypotheses of this study was that outdoor meal guests tend to visit the emergency room more often than indoor meal guests. It was assumed that indoor meal guests are more likely to receive connections to various services at formal, indoor establishments.

While we do not have access to formal statistical software, we did compare the rates of emergency room visits between indoor and outdoor guests, since we still had a significant population of both categories. We found that on average, indoor meal guests visited the emergency room 0.95 times in the past three months while outdoor meal guests visited the emergency room 1.23 times. While this would need to be evaluated to determine statistical significance, this could support the claim that access to indoor meal sites is correlated with less emergency room visits. Originally, the goal was that the Food Access Collaborative could potentially reach out to hospitals with this information in order to receive possible support for the growth and sustainability of indoor meal sites.

Benefits & Other Findings

Out of the 239 guests interviewed, 59 did not have any type of health insurance. The remaining 180 meal guests had some type of public or private health insurance. While we do have the individual breakdowns for each type of insurance, we decided to create insured and uninsured groups in order to examine the relationship between health insurance and state-issued photo IDs.

Among the 59 individuals who did not have health insurance, 17 (29%) did not have state-issued photo IDs. Among the 180 individuals who did have some type of insurance, 29 (16%) did not have state-issued photo IDs. There were 2 respondents who refused/were unavailable to provide the name of their insurance. The breakdown of these two groups are displayed below in Figure 8.

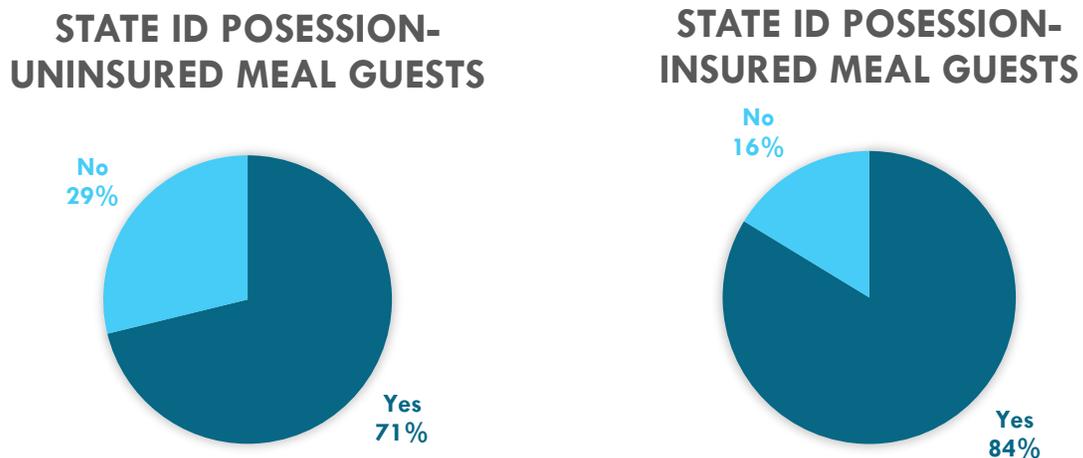


FIGURE 8

Again, while this data would need to be evaluated for statistical significance, this type of information could support the work of the Food Access Collaborative in their work on the ID Philly initiative. This data suggests that there is a relationship between possessing a state-issued photo ID and gaining access to critical services and public benefits (which has already been suggested in the past). As the Food Access Collaborative is currently working on funding for this initiative, this type of actual concrete data could bolster future grant proposals.

Additionally, Figure 9 displays some data points that may be of interest for the Food Access Collaborative. It is interesting to note that the percentage of formerly incarcerated individuals increased from 46.3% in Summer 2014 to 66.1% in Summer 2015. What could possibly explain this drastic change? One possible explanation is that this summer, our team tended to survey mostly along the Parkway near the Free Library instead of diversifying our locations (explained further in our Limitations section). Location could have possibly skewed our numbers. Nevertheless, we can assume that in the general area that we surveyed, there was a large proportion of formerly incarcerated meal guests.

One question originally posed at the beginning of this study was whether we were serving a re-entry population. Based upon our results, it would be useful for the FAC to begin strategizing how they can work together to meet the needs of this population. Services for returning citizens have not been a primary focus in the past, but potential trends between 2014 and 2015 indicate that the FAC may need to prioritize this demographic.

| | N | % |
|------------------------------|-----|------|
| SUBSTANCE ABUSE | 134 | 56.1 |
| INCARCERATION | 158 | 66.1 |
| SNAP BENEFITS | 165 | 69.0 |
| SSI/SSDI | 57 | 23.8 |
| TANF BENEFITS/WELFARE | 19 | 7.9 |

FIGURE 9

Qualitative

Question 34: Is there anything meal guests would like providers to know?

Respondents provided a variety of answers that would be very helpful to consider as we move forward with work in the Food Access Collaborative. Many respondents provided thoughtful, frank recommendations that highlighted issues that meal providers or the Food Access Collaborative may not have considered. The following quotes sum up the main points that surfaced among the responses.

- “Meal providers should be more patient; most homeless people have mental illnesses so hollering and being aggressive toward them doesn’t help.”
- “Maybe instead of a sandwich sometimes they can instead just have conversations with them and let them use their names as references to apply for jobs. They never talk about connecting the guests to services all they do is give out food and leave, which can make people dependent on them.”
- “Guests are always late so meal providers should extend the time.”

LIMITATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a comprehensive list of the reoccurring logistical issues our team encountered over the course of our seven weeks of surveying, as well as possible recommendations to address our concerns:

Unreliable Meal Times: As mentioned earlier, we did not have an accurate and reliable schedule of free meals taking place in the city. This resulted in our team either arriving at a location with no meal provider or a time when a meal was coming to a close. Back-up locations were available for some meal times, but these reoccurring issues limited the amount of people our team was able to survey

- ➔ In order to address this discrepancy, we recommend that FAC should have more contact with the meal providers listed in order to obtain accurate meal site times. We also recommend that FAC should provide all interns with phone numbers for each meal provider, so that this miscommunication between both parties can be resolved

Weekday Surveying: Because we did not have the freedom within our internship to survey on weekends, we did not survey at any free meals on Saturdays and Sundays. Surveying on the weekend would allow us a greater variety of opinions and perspectives that would increase the scope and credibility of this report. Many guests also cited Sunday as one of the hardest days to acquire a free meal, so surveying on the weekend could provide more insight on how to fix this problem. There also may be some guests that only attend meal sites on the weekend. This limitation could potentially have impacted the range and scope of our data.

- ➔ In order to address this discrepancy, we recommend that FAC should require interns to survey at least once on the weekend in order to diversify the data. Interns should go to both outdoor and indoor meal sites during the weekend to effectively fix this limitation.

Lack of Randomization: For any survey, randomization is key. This was difficult for our team, however, because when interns arrived at sites, guests would immediately form a line to take the survey. We found it hard to turn people away who had been waiting in line and deny them equal chances of getting SEPTA tokens;

- ➔ A possible solution to this problem is to clearly explain to participants that our method is entirely random and we are not intentionally excluding anyone. We had more success when we picked a starting place on the food line and explained to meal guests that we were simply going down the line, surveying one out of every fifth person until our surveys ran out. We found that this approach increased randomization because participants were more likely to understand our intentions and remain in the food line if they wanted the chance to be selected for the survey. It would also be helpful for interns to undergo a training session in preparation for the surveying process, so that they are better equipped to handle certain social situations where meal guests become frustrated and possibly aggressive when denied the opportunity to take the survey.

- **Guests Taking Surveys Multiple Times:** Lack of a formal system in place to identify whether a guest had already taken a survey, coupled with different interns interviewing at different sites every week, meant that it was likely that many guests were interviewed more than once. Because a majority of our surveys took place on the Parkway near the Free Library, we also began to recognize the same individuals at these meal sites. Thus, even if we did have some sort of accountability system, we would have had a hard time getting enough different guests to take the survey

- ➔ A long-term solution to this problem is to continue revising and improving the Food Access Collaborative's Weekday Emergency Meal Schedule in order to increase the amount of reliable meal times and locations each week. With a greater variety of meal distribution times, interns would be able to survey a more diverse population of meal recipients. A more short-term solution would be to arrange a fixed surveying schedule for the interns; every week, each intern or pair of interns would attend the same free meal distribution. With this method, interns would quickly begin to recognize the "regulars" of the meal sites and identify which ones have taken the survey and which ones have not. Interns would communicate amongst themselves to ensure that meal guests surveyed by one intern are not surveyed again by the other intern. While this method would not prevent meal guests from taking the survey multiple times at different meal sites, it would help to develop a sense of familiarity so that interns are able to identify survey participants at their regular meal distributions.

Ambiguous Language in Survey Questions: There were several questions with ambiguous wording that meal guests that meal guests found difficult to understand. Because we did not help create the survey and wanted to standardize the surveys as much as possible, the resulting responses may not have fully answered the question. We discuss some of the more problematic questions below.

Question 2: What do you like about where you live?

Due to the fact that this question was open ended, respondents answered this question in many ways. Some respondents commented on the physical nature of Philadelphia, like its cleanliness and weather. Many stated that they enjoyed a particular area of the city, with "Center City" as the most popular response among this type of answer. Other respondents commented on the convenience of living in the city, such as the transportation system and access to free meals and shelters. More abstract answers included responses related to "freedom," "serenity", and "compassion." Twenty-five respondents noted the quietness of the city, while around fifty respondents stated they did not like anything about where they lived. Due to the ambiguity of the question, it was unclear whether respondents were commenting on the actual location where they lived, or the city of Philadelphia as a whole.

- ➔ We recommend that this question be re-worded such that it distinguishes between the neighborhood and the physical space where a respondent is residing.

Question 6: What makes a good meal?

The responses surrounding this question ranged from specific menu items to the quantity of ingredients to the "effort" or "love" contained in the meal. About 37 respondents stated that they felt chicken should be included to make a good meal. A large portion of the responses cited a "balanced" or "nutritious" meal, complete with a protein, vegetable, and starch, made a good meal. Interestingly, about 27 respondents stated that a "hot" meal made a good meal.

- ➔ We recommend that the question specifies what makes a nutritious meal or what makes an enjoyable meal. We understand that this question was purposely left open-ended, but the resulting data did not appear to be helpful for our analysis.

Question 8: What are the top two services at free meal sites you would like to see at free meal sites?

The data showed that “housing assistance” and “employment services” were most frequently chosen as the top two services. While these services could accurately represent services in demand, they also were placed at the top of the list of options for this question. It is possible that their placement in the survey could likely have led to their overwhelming popularity among respondents. Further supporting this hypothesis, we found that when calculating the preferences for all of the options listed, popularity was almost exactly correlated to the positioning. For example, “housing assistance” garnered the most “votes” while “assistance applying for benefits” was last on the list and last in terms of votes.

Question 9: Which of the following additional services would you most like to see at free meal sites?

Due to the fact that this question is structured similarly to question 8, we expected similar trends in responses, with the first service listed receiving the most “votes.” However, this was not the case. The top choice was “medical and dental services/checkups”, selected by 81 respondents,, with “clothing” coming in second. “Toiletries” had 34 responses, while “food pantry/food vouchers” and “religious/spiritual services” received 19 and 15 respectively. “Mail access” only received 7 votes. This could be largely due to the fact that numerous shelters offer free mail access to their guests.

➔ For both Question #8 and #9, we recommend more consistency in using the cue cards that were provided to the interns. These cards were not received until midway through surveying; thus, only a certain portion of respondents were able to visualize the options were being given in question #8. We also recommend that respondents be allowed to read the options for themselves and that options only be read aloud if respondents cannot read them for themselves.

Question 10: If you had to pick the 3 meals that you want miss most often, what would they be?

All survey administrators this summer found that this question appeared to be difficult to answer for most meal guests. Respondents did not typically list three separate meals, but rather, general days and times that they highlighted as gaps in the free meal services. Overall, breakfasts were reported as the meals that were missed most often. Monday Breakfast- the highest reported specific meal- was cited by 62 respondents as a difficult meal to obtain. Sundays were also a popular cited day; respondents stated that meal providers seemed to be absent from the Parkway and other meal sites across the city.

➔ We recommend rewording this question such that it directly asks for the information that FAC is seeking. It seeks to identify specific meal times during the week where there are not any meal providers serving. Many of the meal guests regularly visit meal sites and have a general sense of meal times and locations. Asking meal guests “Are there certain times of the week when there are no meals being offered?” may be less confusing and prompt clearer answers.

Question 19: Violence at Meal Sites

The first two questions of this set reflected the most even distribution of responses. The next two questions received responses skewed significantly towards 1, or “Not at All”. The first two

questions ask for the respondent's observation of meal site behavior and activities while the last two questions ask about the guests' personal experience and involvement. The difference in responses may be because respondents are more willing to share information about violence that does not directly involve them personally. On the other hand, the violence that several of the respondents have witnessed could be the result of a small group of individuals that regularly engage in confrontations at meal sites.

- ➔ To effectively gauge levels of violence at meal sites, we recommend clarifying the ranking system. In other sections of the survey where respondents are asked questions measured on a spectrum, the levels are not based on a numerical scale but rather qualitative points along the spectrum. For example, when asked about their health, respondents are given the options of "Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair and Poor". Rewording question #19 to ask for qualitative measures along a spectrum may be easier to communicate to respondents. Asking respondents to choose between options of having seen/been involved with violence "never, once or twice, or frequently" or in terms like "more than once a week, more than once a month, more than once every six months" may provide a more standardized and concrete point of reference for respondents and surveyors.

Question 31/32: Indoor meals versus outdoor meals

For key informants, Question #31 and #32 were redundant and did not always yield different answers. When responses were distinct, guests cited comfort and relief from the elements as reasons for seeking indoor meals. Respondents also cited that indoor meals are more reliable. Some respondents stated that they like to be seated during a meal. Many respondents said that outdoor meals provide guests with more food. Others liked the atmosphere of being outdoors. Again, with many respondents there was some confusion around the wording of this question. Many gave the same responses for both questions.

- ➔ Since these Question #31 did not provide much distinct information, we recommend consolidating these questions into one that asks respondents to identify important factors in their decisions about eating indoors or outdoors. This may be more effective in providing separate, valuable information.

CONCLUSION

While it was difficult at times to consistently collect data, there two major accomplishments made that moved the work of the Food Access Collaborative forward. First, we were able to create the most up-to-date schedule of meal times and locations that will need to be maintained after our departure. Second, while the city's relationship with outdoor providers has been quite strained recently, we were able to build connections with many providers, especially Five Barley Loaves, in order to gain more input on how we can call work together to better serve meal guests.

We had quite a bit of data analysis, but some of our main findings were that housing and employment continue to be the most requested services. Individuals lacking state-issued photo IDs also tended to not be connected to other services.

Beyond the recommendations of tightening language in the Guest Survey, we also recommend expanding meal sites beyond Center City, since a large proportion of our guests were spending the night outside Center City. The Food Access Collaborative should also focus on how it can better serve the re-entry population, as this seems to be a growing population among meal guests. Lastly, there is a need for better communication not only between the FAC and providers, but among providers themselves in order to not duplicate meal times. This is why it is even more critical to continue working towards building relationships with outdoor meal providers.

Upon further revision, we also found that two of our limitations- double counting and randomization- were actually cleared by the ScatterGood Foundation as not having a significant impact on the results of the study. However, it is still critical to think about the three remaining limitations as the FAC moves forward with this study.