

2012 Food Bank Survey Summary (Chelan, Douglas and Grant Counties)

Community Harvest, a project of Community Farm Connection conducted a survey of food banks in Chelan, Douglas and Grant counties to assess the capacity of local food banks, evaluate current modes of food distribution, and determine the need for more fresh produce.

The goal was to obtain constructive feedback in order to develop the new gleaning project, Community Harvest, in a way that would be beneficial to already existing organizations. This survey was made to be anonymous is desired.

This survey provides some interesting data that will be useful in tracking the progress that this gleaning project makes on helping to supply food banks with more fresh produce. In addition, the survey provides basic information about regional food bank trends and what is desired by food banks in order to more effectively serve their communities.

Some of the significant findings are as follows:

Only 36% of food banks have paid staff representing 5 full time and 7 part time total for all three counties.

Of the food banks surveyed 100% indicated that their clients desire more fresh fruits and vegetables.

Additionally, 100% of respondents indicated an inadequate supply of fresh produce. One local food bank indicated that in 1½ hours, during the food bank, they can go through over 2,000lbs of fresh produce and still could use more. As a result, many of these food banks purchase fresh produce throughout the year.

According the survey 86% of respondents attributed clientele fluctuation to seasonal work.

Respondent's storage capacity for produce varies widely from having walk in coolers to having a couple small refrigerators. This can be a severely limiting factor for food banks to be able to provide adequate quality and quantity of produce to clients on a regular basis. These statements show the need for some of the produce to be processed in order to increase shelf life. For example, when apples are in season drying a portion of donated apples would allow food banks to store more fruit for a longer period of time.

Over 86% of food banks say that the amount of people visiting the food banks is growing and the remaining 14% say that numbers have remained consistent over the past year. One food bank indicated that clientele has dramatically risen 30% from 2010 and 37% from 2009. Another food bank responded that clientele has more than doubled in the last 6 months. The need for food assistance is increasing, often at alarming rates. Connecting local farms with local food banks is going to be essential as fuel prices rise and more people are relying on help for basic food needs.

A significant number of respondents mentioned increasing communication as way to improve the food bank

system.