

# Food Insecurity + Sustainable Communities

*How can we sustainably address the obstacles involved with food insecurity?*

---

## Welcome to DFA!

Over the next few weeks, you will take on the DFA design process to address your team's focus through the lens of the community's needs. We invite you to look at [DFA National's Design Process 1-Pagers](#) for more information on the process.

## Project Overview:

In the United States, 1 out of 8 individuals experience food insecurity. The COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened the issue of food insecurity with worldwide economic and supply chain impacts. Many critical issues are intertwined with – and can be approved by addressing – food insecurity, such as sustainability, education, mental health, and food access.

During this project, you will research your specific problem through engagements with stakeholders and community members, generate ideas and strategies to address narrower problem spaces, and test your concepts and assumptions with users and/or stakeholders.

## Food Insecurity Education:

An unmet need in addressing food insecurity is education, particularly among the 6th to 12th grade age groups. Many families experiencing food insecurity include teenagers, but conducting outreach to this age group has proven difficult as trends have changed. One local concept in elementary schools is "[share tables](#)," where students can drop off unwanted, packaged food for other students who are still hungry, or students in after-school programs, to take.

But what about when students move beyond elementary school? Students have outgrown many of the games and concepts they used in elementary school, and they desire authentic, relatable content that appeals to them and speaks to their needs. Educating students about food insecurity can help them recognize the signs of food insecurity, promote actions they can take to address the issue, and gain support from peers and community members in a safe space.

How can we educate 6–12th graders on food insecurity in an engaging manner?

## College Food Insecurity:

A third of Rutgers students are food-insecure, with this impacting off-campus students more than on-campus students. Rutgers has resources like SO RAH (Student Organized Rutgers Against Hunger), which aims to address food insecurity through awareness on campus, as well as the Rutgers Student Food

Pantry located in the College Ave Student Center. Course syllabi also have information on food access resources and the Dean of Students' Office; the Dean of Students' Office can assign students meal swipes and provide temporary assistance. Additionally, students can donate unused meal swipes to students in need. This challenge focuses on reducing the stigma associated with seeking food assistance and making the process to seek food assistance at college more intuitive.

How can we eliminate the stigma associated with seeking food assistance to mitigate food insecurity among college students?

### **Food Bank Access:**

Food banks are looking into innovative ways to achieve their missions while also supporting the local community that they serve. For instance, Unity Square Community Center is working on a Choice Food Resource Center that lets clients go through aisles for food, much like they would in a grocery or convenience store. This allows clients to seek out food assistance with greater dignity and independence. However, other issues still remain: food banks use a "grab and go" system where clients line up to get food. This also means that clients have to wait in line, presenting a pain point in that not all clients are physically able to, whether due to work or disability. This challenge centers around making it easier to obtain food from food pantries.

How can we streamline the process of receiving food from food pantries?

### **Food Sustainability:**

Food and climate are intertwined; climate change can affect food availability, access, and production. Climate change can cause disruptions to the food ecosystem that can cause price increases, limited availability, and food safety risks. As the climate crisis intensifies and with an ever-growing population, it's important now more than ever to make sure the food ecosystem is ready for this climate. In this challenge, you will research and address ways to make the food ecosystem more sustainable.

How can we reduce roadblocks in the food ecosystem to make it more sustainable?

### **Possible Outputs:**

You will produce an end deliverable during this project; however, after researching your specific problem space and discussing with your Community Advocate(s), your output may differ. Outputs can include case studies, reports, prototypes, services, concepts, etc.

