

California Nutrition and Healthy Eating Initiative

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE



Organizational Change Subcommittee Members

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Organizational Change Subcommittee Goals

- To provide case studies of strategic approaches to promoting organization-wide commitment to nutritious and healthy eating;
- To offer a toolkit of samples of mission statements, strategic plan goals and objectives, and other organizational documents that reflect the commitment;

The Case Studies Approach

Our overall approach was to collect and disseminate case studies of organizations that have undergone the organizational change it takes to make nutritious food provision an organization-wide commitment. The subcommittee chose four case studies from California that include a food bank, a meal provider and two food pantry programs. In addition, we also reviewed organizational change efforts from three East Coast food banks. Together, these case studies provide examples of best practices in making an organizational shift to a stronger commitment to nutrition and healthy eating.

CASE STUDY #1: St. Anthony Foundation Dining Room

Population served: Low-income and homeless San Franciscans.

Years in existence: 58

What it provides: Average of 2,600 meals per day, 365 days a year.

Budget size: \$2 million

Staff size: 17 Dining Room Staff. 5 Security Staff per day. 25 food preparation volunteers.

Volunteer size: 300 regular volunteers.
5,000 one-time volunteers each year.

Interviewee's name & title: Cissie Bonini, Dining Room Director
Michael Kearney, Dining Room Manager

Years in current position: Cissie: 13 years.
Michael: 8 years.

Prior work experience: Michael worked in air traffic control and also for a high-end catering company. Before working in St. Anthony's Dining Room, Cissie worked in St. Anthony's Clothing and Furniture program and in the HR department.

Narrative

Cissie's personal commitment to improving the St. Anthony Dining Room is connected to the realization that San Francisco's hungry are not just hungry for food, but also hungry for nutrition, improved health, and hungry to be treated with dignity and respect. What was important to her was making the Dining Room not just a service about satiating hunger, but one that conveys dignity and respect through healthy, nutritious food in a safe, friendly setting.

Michael has always been passionate about healthy and nutritious food, even before working at St. Anthony Foundation. He was excited about working for an anti-hunger organization because he would have a chance to put into practice his belief that *everyone* has a right to healthy and nutritious food, regardless of their economic status.

When Cissie began working as Dining Room Manager in 1995, she felt that the food quality in the Dining Room needed to be improved in order to help St. Anthony Foundation fulfill its mission. (See examples in Toolkit following these case studies). Cissie also noticed an attitude among some dining-room staff and volunteers that dining-room guests should "be thankful for whatever they get" (even if it's low-quality, non-nutritious food). She realized that the effort to improve the Dining Room's food would be a massive undertaking that could upset long-term volunteers, donors, staff, and guests. However, she was absolutely committed to "use the social capital of the Dining Room food to lift the spirits of people in need." Cissie says that her persistence came from a desire to "keep the vision for the Dining Room on the guests – it's not about us [staff]."

One of Cissie's goals was to switch from using pre-packaged foods to cooking with fresh ingredients. In order for the dining room to be able to do this, she realized that the kitchen staffing system would have to change from a food prep model to an executive chef model. Because the staffing changes would not result in a change in the budget, the Board of Directors did not have to sign off on the change. Cissie had the support of her supervisor and was able to implement the changes herself. The transition began with the hiring of an Executive Chef,

Michael Perry. Michael was a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America and had cooked in some of the best restaurants in San Francisco. Michael had the vision to use a “home cooking” model in the dining room. To most of St. Anthony Foundation’s stakeholders, it seemed crazy at first to have a gourmet chef working in a soup kitchen, but Michael’s cooking experience and expertise allowed the Dining Room to serve better tasting, more nutritious food while lowering the program’s food costs.

Michael Kearney, who was a Dining Room chef at the time, and is now the Dining Room Manager, said, “When I started [in 2000], we were the crazy anomaly, we were the weirdos.” While other congregate feeding programs in San Francisco preferred to use processed food, St. Anthony’s Dining Room was actively pushing its vendors, including the SF Food Bank and local farmers, for more organic fresh produce. Cooking meals with fresh ingredients is more labor-intensive than using heat-and-serve and processed food, but since St. Anthony’s has volunteer labor in abundance, this change could be made without increasing the cost of labor.

According to Michael, the Dining Room used to rely on USDA commodities for 25% of its food. The timing of the transition to the Executive Chef model was not planned, yet it worked out very well. At the same time that the Dining Room was transitioning from USDA pre-packaged food to fresh food, the amount of food that the Dining Room received from the USDA decreased drastically. Currently, canned foods from the USDA have been replaced by fresh foods from the SF Food Bank and from local vendors. The Dining Room was able to switch to fresh foods because its new chefs were graduates of culinary institutes. Once the Executive Chef was on board, job descriptions for other kitchen positions were changed (see Job Description excerpts in Toolkit). Food vendors were also changed in order to bring in more fresh produce and less processed food.

The Dining Room’s new job descriptions represent the only formal documentation of the transformation of the Dining Room’s operations. There was no board-approved strategic planning process that spurred the Dining Room’s transformation, yet the process itself was a formal one. Cissie states that it took four years to fully implement the Dining Room’s new food preparation and acquisition procedures. Along the way, she realized that it was important that education of the staff, guests, and volunteers went along hand-in-hand with the menu changes. The staff, the guests, and the volunteers learned of St. Anthony Dining Room’s commitment to health and nutrition as the changes were communicated to them. That education continues on an ongoing basis through the newsletter, monthly menu distribution, client survey, volunteer town hall meetings, new volunteer orientations, and nutritional analyses of the Dining Room food. Michael mentioned that he feels that St. Anthony’s does a good job of communicating its commitment to nutrition and healthy eating internally, but needs to improve on its communications with the public. “There’s still a perception of the St. Anthony Foundation Dining Room as a ‘soup kitchen’. We need to create a new word for what we do – home cooking of rescued food on a large scale.”

Cissie and Michael both noted that there was resistance to the new food preparation methods among some Dining Room staff and volunteers. Some of the cooks who worked at the Dining Room under its old food preparation system were resistant to changes -- they didn’t want to have to do more work in order to prep the fresh foods the Dining Room was now using. Some of the cooks eventually changed their minds about the new system while others left the organization.

Once Dining Room volunteers learned about the nutritional value of using fresh food, they began to accept the new food preparation procedures. According to Cissie, St. Anthony

Foundation did lose volunteers during the process, some of whom were also major donors. But St. Anthony's also gained new donors and new volunteers. "In many cases, donor relationships improved because we could accept more donations with the new staff that were actually able to prepare fresh food. A donation of whole salmon, for example, was able to be used because our new chefs knew how to fillet it; in the past, such a donation would have been turned down."

Once people started to appreciate the Dining Room's food more, some of the feathers that were ruffled initially were smoothed down. The process was gradual: according to Cissie and Michael, it took four years to fully implement the new structure. Cissie and Michael feel that the staff commitment to organizational change is the key component to achieving change.

Cissie said that if she were to give advice to other meal providers who are looking to implement similar changes in their programs, she'd advise that they get formal approval for the changes from the Board of Directors by highlighting the cost-effectiveness of an Executive Chef model. Cissie strongly feels that boards on nonprofit organizations with meal programs need to understand the importance of spending money to hire qualified chef staff because it is simply a good, cost-effective business practice.

Key to this transformation is an understanding of a sensitivity to the clients. In the Tenderloin neighborhood of San Francisco, the low-income urban environment characterized by SRO (single room occupancy) hotels without cooking facilities creates unique needs among the people who use St. Anthony's Dining Room. Because St. Anthony's has made a commitment to understand its clients, the commitment to promoting health and nutrition is tied to an ongoing process of organizational change.

Highlights of St. Anthony's Case Study

- State commitment in newsletter, e.g., the switch in emphasis from pre-packaged to fresh food
- Highlight commitment in monthly menu distribution
- Conduct client survey that includes healthy-eating questions
- Promote at volunteer Town Hall Meetings
- Train new volunteers in the philosophy
- Include nutritious food commitment in the Nutritional Analysis of Dining Room food
- Try to get early board formal approval to overcome staff resistance

For more information about Project MANA, please visit: www.stanthonysf.org
Please feel free to also contact Colleen Rivecca at: crivecca@stanthonysf.org

CASE STUDY #2: Project MANA

Population served: Low-income working families in North Shore Lake Tahoe and Truckee. (84% Latino)

Years in existence: since 1991

What it provides: Duplicated clients: households = 8,154, individuals = 28,864. Unique clients: 681 households, 5,717 individuals.

Budget size: \$250,000

Staff size: Paid staff = 2 FTE plus 0.5 FTE office manager. 2 Americorps Volunteers.

Volunteer size: 100

Interviewee's name & title: George LeBard, Executive Director

Years in current position: 10 years

Other significant accomplishments: Peace Corps, Deputy Director for Belize.

Narrative

George LeBard's personal commitment to incorporating nutrition and healthy eating into the mission of Project MANA began his first day on the job. When George started working as Executive Director of the organization, some nutrition and healthy-eating initiatives had been started, but George felt that their potential had not been fully realized. It was George's goal to strengthen the healthy eating and nutrition objectives of Project MANA's services.

George's first step in strengthening Project MANA's commitment to nutrition was to build the organization's capacity to provide nutrition education and healthy food distribution. "Once the support is built within the organization, it's easier to go outside and build the same capacity outside and find outside supporters." He had an idea about the types of changes that he was hoping to implement, but he wanted to see what his staff thought first.

George's approach to implementing organizational change is to come to stakeholders (board, staff, or clients) with an issue and with possible options for addressing that issue. After involving stakeholders in a discussion about the issue and the possible options, he makes sure that everyone reaches agreement about what to do next. This process helps to promote stakeholder buy-in.

George points out that a critical component of achieving organizational change is in following up after buy-in is achieved. According to George, "It's kind of like doing an informal MOU. I just follow a staff meeting, or any meeting where agreements are made and concepts are understood, with a clear outline of what we agreed to with next steps. I have seen many good ideas die at the table because everyone gets up and leaves them there. You can always go back to the original agreement and change it if there are changes or new agreements."

Because his board does not want to micro-manage it was only peripherally engaged in MANA's evolution toward healthier food. The board only needs to get involved with the daily routine when a practice or procedure might take the organization off its mission or would result in going over budget.

Project MANA's strategic plan and mission statement are the main formal commitment to nutrition and healthy eating. The job descriptions for the Americorps and VISTA volunteer

positions are also important formal change documents, as these positions were created to be specific to nutrition education and outreach with area schools and the community at large. (See Strategic Plan excerpts in attached Toolkit.)

The fact that Project MANA is a small organization helps them maintain the consistency of their programs. The Americorps and VISTA positions turn over each year, yet the focus of their job descriptions stays the same. George says that the infusion of new staff into the organization has helped to invigorate him and the other full-time staff member.

George mentioned that Project MANA's work has paid off in terms of building relationships and partnerships with the community, local schools, and the media. By laying the groundwork for offering quality nutrition education programs, George was able to build Project MANA's relationship with schools, which now welcome them to do nutrition education with their students. Project MANA did some proactive outreach to the local newspaper about the obesity epidemic, and because of their reputation in the community, was able to clarify the connection between poverty and obesity through a series of newspaper articles.

For internal communication purposes, George has created wall-size charts containing information about all of the organization's food and education programs. George feels that these visuals increase the capacity of agency because they are an orientation in themselves. He has used these visuals to help build the organization's relationships with volunteers and donors.

According to George, "The programs themselves don't cost that much. It's the person to do it that is the important thing." Finding dedicated staff that are passionate about nutrition and healthy eating is one of the most important things he did to implement his nutrition objectives. "Americorps has helped a lot with staff capacity." Americorps volunteers' energy and enthusiasm are very high, and their presence recharges the permanent staff.

George's advice for other organizations who are trying to figure out how to integrate nutrition and healthy eating into their food and education programs is to focus first on building staff capacity. George says, "Materials are available. You don't have to re-invent the wheel. Talk to someone who is already doing it. This work can be done in increments, so don't feel that it has to be done all at once in order to be effective."

Highlights from Project MANA Case Study

- ED to set goal to strengthen the healthy-eating and nutrition objectives
- Get buy-in from stakeholders on importance of healthy eating
- Include the commitment in the mission statement and strategic plan
- Outreach to local newspapers about the obesity epidemic and clarify the connection between poverty and obesity through newspaper articles
- Post wall-size charts on organization's healthy food education programs to visually demonstrate to donors and volunteers your commitment
- Recruit dedicated staff who are passionate about nutrition and healthy eating
- Engage young volunteers who are enthusiastic about nutrition, e.g., Americorps
- Use available materials on good nutrition

For more information about Project MANA, please visit: www.projectmana.org
Please feel free to contact George LeBard directly at: georgel@projectmana.org

CASE STUDY #3: Food for People

Population served: Humboldt County

Years in existence: 30 years

What it provides: 1.3 million lbs./year

Budget size: \$700,900 annually

Staff size: 11 FT, 3 PT and currently 2 VISTA

Volunteer size: base of 200 volunteers/month contributing an average of 1400 hrs/month

Interviewee's name & title: Anne Holcomb, Executive Director

Years in current position: 7.5 years

Prior work experience: 20 years working as administrator in programs serving people with disabilities; oversaw the Maine Meeting Place a free, statewide online bulletin board service with chat rooms moderated by people with disabilities (one of the first of its kind nationwide) and a recycled computer program

Other significant accomplishments: Appointed regional chair for the Governor's Integrated Case Management Pilot by the Maine Children's Cabinet; served as board member for the Maine Early Intervention Coalition; was a founding board member and secretary for the Maine Special Education Mental Health Collaborative; served on steering committee for Nor CAN, the northern California Association of Nonprofits; currently vice chair of the CA Association of Food Banks and chair of CAFB's Governance and Membership Committee and as a member of the steering committee of Humboldt Communities for Activity and Nutrition.

Narrative

Anne Holcomb spent 20 years working as an administrator of programs serving people with disabilities. She saw firsthand how diet and nutrition impact people's overall health, well-being, and even their tendency toward depression.

At Food for People, her interest was piqued in making an organizational commitment to nutrition when she heard that clients were asking questions about health and diabetes during cooking classes. She got even more interested when she saw the food they were delivering to seniors and disabled clients: "I saw the food we were giving them and said, 'We need to do better for these folks.'"

When she started at Food for People six years ago, Anne was not alone in her interest in improving food quality. In fact, Food for People already had some commitment in place through an ongoing partnership with Humboldt County Public Health. There was one public-health staffer, in particular, who was especially passionate about nutrition who would host a monthly cooking class at the food bank. Anne invited her to join the board, with the idea that she would share her experience and enthusiasm with other board members.

Without developing a formal strategy for bringing nutrition and healthy eating into the organization's fabric, Anne took a major first step in that direction when the public health staffer joined the board. As a board member, the staffer was able to raise awareness among board members by voicing her concerns about giving out palettes of candy bars, and making clear how handing out junk food was undermining the messages in the cooking classes. As Food for People began to shift its mission and operations to include nutrition and healthy eating, Anne encountered resistance from a number of directions.

Staff, for example, was initially resistant because they had concerns with turning away donations and insulting donors, especially new donors. Anne responded by taking time, with assistance from Public Health staff, to discuss the issue of healthy food and nutrition during staff meetings. They also did a client survey that showed that many clients do not eat fruits or vegetables, either because they are too costly or they don't know how to cook them, which further emphasized the need for fresh produce as well as nutrition education.

Anne now feels that "staff understands that their clients are dealing with diabetes and obesity and that nutrition is an important issue for them." They also now employ a successful practice where they accept all first-time donations from new donors, then meet with them individually and explain their organizational philosophy about nutrition. Neither their volunteers nor clients have demonstrated resistance. In fact, many clients expressed gratitude when Food for People started serving more fruits and vegetables.

The board was ultimately the group that was slowest to embrace the organizational shift. This was less because the board was resistant to change and more because the board members were not knowledgeable about the role that poverty plays in making good food choices. The board member who was a nutritionist with Public Health was instrumental in helping the board both understand the issue and embrace the concept that Food for People could be a powerful instrument for change.

In addition, Anne has taken advantage of board turnover to include the organization's commitment to healthier food as an important part of the new board members' orientation. She meets with them individually to ensure that they understand the depth of the organization's commitment to nutrition and healthy eating.

Donors were generally supportive of the organizational shift, with the exception of a local retail store that had been a source of donations for a few months. Food for People lost them as a donor when they made a shift to accepting only healthy donations because they simply did not have the staff or resources to sort their donations so that they could comply with Food for People's needs. The store did not feel they could handle the logistics needed to provide only healthy foods.

Anne has implemented a number of formal actions that reflect an organizational commitment to nutrition and healthy eating. They re-worked their mission statement in 2005 so that it now gives equal emphasis to eliminating hunger and improving health: *"Food for People is working to eliminate hunger and improve the health and well-being of our community through access to healthy and nutritious foods, community education, and advocacy."*

In addition, their Strategic Plan, which they are currently revising, also has a healthy food element. Work plans and job descriptions have also been adapted to reflect this organizational shift. Perhaps most important, they have jobs specifically dedicated to nutrition education, food stamp outreach and healthy eating.

Programmatically, one of their most successful efforts has been the Free Farmer's Market, a monthly event that draws about 600 people. The set-up is like any other farmer's market, except that everything is free. On average, each individual walks out with about 12 to 14 pounds of produce. Food for People has also developed a Hunger 101 workshop that they have used to train community groups, volunteers, and even Public Health staff on the role that

poverty plays in making good food choices and the importance of identifying affordable options and strategies.

As for advice for food banks about to embark on a similar journey, Anne had the following to say: “As an agency that provides a lot of direct service through our food bank, it would be much more difficult to infuse that nutrition message across all programs if we did not have a staff position dedicated to nutrition education. Program staff are generally very busy just making sure their programs are operating smoothly, so it is incredibly helpful to have a staff person with the time and the skills necessary to research recipes and outreach strategies, coordinate cooking classes and taste-testing opportunities, etc. It also makes the message more consistent across all programs, which is reinforcing for both staff and clients. My own experiences have taught me that browbeating [doesn’t work]. It can take a while to impact folk’s comfort zones when it comes to food!”

Highlights from Food for People Case Study

- Form ongoing partnerships with local Public Health
- Invite Public Health nutritionist to join the board
- Discuss nutrition at staff meetings
- Conduct client survey to determine level of healthy-food eating awareness
- Make clear to staff and volunteers that handing out junk food undermines messages in the cooking classes
- Accept all first-time donations, then meet with new donors to explain organizational nutrition philosophy
- Rework the mission statement to give equal weight to eliminating hunger and improving health
- Adapt work plans and job descriptions to reflect the commitment
- Create jobs that are specifically dedicated to nutrition education, food stamp outreach and healthy eating.
- Don’t browbeat. Be patient in promoting the switch

For more information about Food for People please visit: www.foodforpeople.org

Please feel free to also contact Anne Holcomb directly at: aholcomb@foodforpeople.org

CASE STUDY #4: SOVA Community Food & Resource Program

Population served: People living in poverty in L.A., over 6000 individuals a month.

Years in existence: 25 years

What it provides: 1.3 million pounds of food.

Budget size: \$1.6 Million

Staff size: 9 full time, 6 part time

Volunteer size: 200

Interviewee's name & title: Fred Summers, Operations Manager

Years in current position: 2 years

Prior work experience: 10 years in international supply chain management

Narrative

Fred Summers, Director of Operations for SOVA Community Food & Resource Program, estimates that most clients who come to SOVA today leave with at least 5 pounds of fresh produce per person. Just six years ago this would not have been possible. But the combined influence of having a visionary executive director in Leslie Friedman as well as the support of their umbrella organization, Jewish Family Services, made these changes possible.

Today, when SOVA buys food for distribution, they consciously choose healthier products. They save their money for protein and nutritionally dense foods, don't buy soda or juices high in sugar, or fruit that is in heavy syrup. "When we spend money, it's going to be for whole grain cereals, dairy, for high-protein beef stew, tuna, peanut butter--things that will have a higher nutritional content," says Fred.

SOVA's evolution to becoming an organization that prioritizes nutritious, healthy food has undergone several stages. SOVA began its journey from having a random and inconsistent supply of fresh produce to emphasizing the distribution of fresh fruits and vegetables when it was taken over by Jewish Family Services in 2002. Leslie Friedman was the executive director at the time and shared with Jewish Family Services an interest in serving healthier food. She wanted to turn SOVA into an example of what such a food program could be, and Jewish Family Services helped open the door for organizational change.

In 2004, SOVA took their efforts another step further by developing a program that allowed them to respond to some of their clients' unique dietary needs. SOVA again applied special grant funding to purchase food for clients with special health requirements such as low-sodium, low-sugar, or enriched-protein diets.

In 2007, they received a grant from the Kraft Foundation to greatly expand their freezer and cooler capacity. This additional capacity allowed SOVA to accept more fresh produce that would stay good longer, as well as other items like yogurt.

Finally, SOVA used grant money to fund a nutritionist who currently visits the pantry several times a month and will sit in on one-on-one sessions with clients, and who provides free nutrition information classes.

SOVA now relies on a diverse array of resources to supply them with the healthy and nutritious food they have available. As a beneficiary agency of Westside Food Bank and L.A. Regional Food Bank, SOVA reaps the rewards from their participation in the Farm to Family program. SOVA also gets support from two local schools that have on-site gardens and donate their yield. Finally, a local Sunday farmer's market allows SOVA to pick up leftovers for distribution.

"Fortunately, organizational resistance to change has been minimal, especially among staff. SOVA's Advisory Committee--its de facto board--cares more about staying within the limited food-purchasing budget than on what foods the money is spent." In fact, their Advisory Committee even linked them to grocery wholesalers who would help them bring more produce into their distribution. Also, donors have not been a problem, in large part because SOVA has made healthy and nutritious food the focus of their donation pursuits and food drives. SOVA will still accept some less healthy foods, however; but if they are not happy with a donation they won't accept it. "There's a line we won't cross."

The only resistance they have encountered is from volunteers, who at 200 strong provide most of their labor. "There was definitely resistance among some volunteers, many of who have been there longer than staff—as long as 25 years in some cases—who could not understand why we weren't buying canned peaches or pastries if the clients like them so much," said Fred. SOVA has responded to volunteer concerns with an informal education process that reinforces the importance of providing a well-balanced diet to people who don't always have the means or knowledge to do that on their own.

SOVA has yet to implement formal, written documents such as mission statements or goals that reflect their commitment to nutrition and healthy eating. SOVA's commitment to healthy and nutritious food is most clearly evident from their programmatic efforts and through their dogged pursuit of healthy-food donations.

Highlights from SOVA Case Study

- Spend money on high-nutritional-content food
- Seek grant to expand refrigerator capacity for fresh foods and provide food for clients with special dietary requirements
- Seek grant funds to hire a part-time nutritionist
- Arrange donations of fresh food from local school gardens and farmers' markets
- Have board or advisory council link to grocery wholesalers as part of a food drive that promotes nutritious eating
- Conduct volunteer training that emphasizes the well-balanced diet
- "Dogged pursuit" of healthy food donations

For more information about SOVA, please visit: www.jfsla.org/sova

Please feel free to also contact Fred Summers directly at: fsummers@jfsla.org

Observations/Conclusions

Cultural anthropologists regard food preferences as very resistant to change or modification. This report explores how food providers can bring about the change to healthier eating programming. The case studies cited are stories of how Executive Directors (EDs) have played the role of cultural change agents. Organizational commitment to healthy eating is a strategic decision that requires a plan of action to take on this major shift.

Over the past 20 or 30 years, the junk food industry has poured billions of dollars into massive advertising campaigns. Food providers for the poor have now taken on the daunting task of reversing these unhealthy influences.

As food providers work for a cultural values shift to healthy eating, it is not surprising that resistance to change may appear anywhere, i.e., volunteers, staff, board, and other stakeholders. In overcoming this resistance, many of the providers report they have sought the help of public-health experts, often nutritionists, to help champion the switch to an organizational commitment to healthy eating programs. These public health change agents raise the awareness of board, staff and volunteers about obesity and other health issues.

The EDs in the case studies report that once the organization has made the commitment to change, it is important to maintain a constant and consistent messaging to stakeholders and clients about the importance of healthy eating. Best practice has the message appearing in the mission statement, strategic plans, operations manuals, job descriptions, newsletters, bulletin boards and warehouse signage—wherever the organization is educating its stakeholders.

Another universal recommendation from EDs in the case studies is to have patience. The organizational cultural change may take years rather than months. Good management practice starts with the board to assure the commitment ripples from leadership throughout the entire organization. Effective boards of directors determine the mission, strategic direction, and future programming of the organization. As the legal owners of the organization, they are obligated to assure it is fulfilling its mission and meeting its fiduciary responsibilities.

One concern that may cause nervousness among the board and management about restricting less healthy foods, is fear of alienating donors. A successful tactic for overcoming this hesitancy is to solicit nutrition experts to provide technical assistance to the organization, serve on a food and nutrition committee, or to join the board as openings occur.

As the epidemic of obesity and other consequences of poor diet are further popularized in the mainstream media, this change in awareness will make the ED's job easier in serving as a change agent. In summary, the clear intention for an organizational shift to a commitment more nutritious, healthy-eating requires strategic planning and engagement of all stakeholders.

Building a Strong Foundation for Organizational Change

In 2007, MAZON conducted a survey of 61 California grantees, with 54 responding. One of the survey questions asked what barriers grantees faced in strengthening their efforts to promote nutrition and healthy eating. For those who had not yet made the shift in their priorities from the provision of food to the provision of healthy food, the two most frequently cited barriers (45%) were lack of board support and need for more funding.

An organization's resistance to healthy-eating initiatives is often based on the fear of inadequate resources. In this current economic crisis, there is pressure to get any kind of calories out the door. Some of the key factors to organizational reluctance to ban or limit unhealthy foods are: 1) the fear of turning away donors; 2) not meeting client demand and preference; and 3) not wanting to discard donated food. Even though half of the respondents reported that their organizations limit, or ban, certain foods and/or beverages, only three had a formal board policy to do so.

Best-practice management literature emphasizes the importance of the whole organization integrating a new vision and ethos that all are expected to honor. The leadership of the organization is responsible to re-envision the core mission and make a commitment to nutrition/healthy eating. Change is most likely to occur when staff and board are in alignment on the new direction, and organizational success is measured by change to more desirable behaviors, e.g., higher ratio of nutritious food to empty calories.

Management change theory suggests the following: First, if there is not dissatisfaction with some aspects of the current operations, change is unlikely. Second, good change requires there be a model or vision of what the change would look like. And third, there should be a plan to implement.

If an organization does not feel dissatisfied with the lack of a healthy-food approach, it is unlikely it will invest in change in that direction. If it hasn't entered into a re-envisioning process to integrate the concept, it is unlikely to change, and if there is no serious planning for implementation, the shift is unlikely to occur.

As shown in the case studies, some EDs recognize that best practice calls for an organization-wide commitment, but because of uncertainty as to the board's inclinations, they choose an indirect route to integrating healthy eating into the day-to-day operations. This "slow play" starts with educating staff and volunteers.

Many who have worked to bring about the change advise patience. As one ED put it, "An organization doesn't need to feel that because it can't take on all of this at once, it is not achievable. The most important thing is that it's a process; the end goal may be several years away but you can have shorter-term goals, such as annual goals, to get to where you want to be."

Several EDs thought the presence of a dietician on the board made a big difference in allowing an incremental movement toward integrating nutrition and healthy eating into their strategic plan over the years.

The following example from the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank describes a route to organizational change that starts with staff:

Incorporating nutrition as a consideration in food procurement and distribution was an initiative of nutrition staff. The idea was discussed with other key staff and with our board subcommittee on health and nutrition. In our CHOP education program, we work directly with agency staff to explain the importance of good nutrition to the population they serve and the connection between food and dietary related disease. A white paper was developed which presented the basic arguments as to why considering nutrition was critical to our clients and the adoption of a nutrition policy as it relates to food procurement was advocated. The policy was approved by food bank management, and then our board. We then had the support we needed to begin to incorporate the nutrient value of foods in our procurement activities. We started with a focus on those foods acquired through our discretionary purchases and now has extended to donated and government commodities as well.

It is noteworthy that this ED considers herself to have been the biggest resister initially. Things were gradual enough that she “went along with the tide” – and now she’s proud. She describes her leadership point of view: “There were things where I led the charge—made things happen. And things I let happen, where I stepped out of the way. It took them a while to win me over to where I took it on as an advocate.”

EDs take many paths to organizational change when they don’t feel the best practice of full organizational commitment to integrating change is possible.

Some EDs believe they have implicit permission to introduce healthy-eating programming because the organization has joined coalitions that support nutritious food and/or anti-obesity initiatives. These alliances of food providers, health agencies and other partnerships are known to the board and imply policy agreement.

Another way that an implicit commitment develops is through language in grant applications. Boards routinely approve grant submissions that includes healthy-eating program design elements. So an assertive ED can take this grant application approval as support for the organizational change. For those who have chosen to seek board approval and formal support for a healthy food initiative, the first steps depend on the depth of the resistance, if any exists. Early stages involve preparatory work by the ED to have the board declare its openness to being educated on this issue.

In the move toward best practice, the ED must be determined to make the change and work with the board to make the shift. Two food bank EDs reported it was a nutritionist from public health who joined the board that helped to develop healthy-eating policies. In both cases, it was this new board member who encouraged the rest of the board to begin a process of improving the nutritional quality of the food they distribute. The board’s education may include bringing in outside experts to educate the board on the extent of obesity in the US, the health outcomes for healthy eating, and the efficacy of healthy-eating client education.

One ED told of her frustration that many of her colleagues did not understand the role that poverty plays in making good food choices. She tried to impress upon the potential naysayers the importance of identifying affordable options and strategies. Some board members, in fact, were not resistant to incorporating nutrition education and an emphasis on

healthy foods in their services, it was simply something that had not occurred to them. “Doing a Hunger 101 exercise with them really helped.”

Once the board has invited either an outside expert or staff presentation on the importance of nutritious food, there are several excellent sources of educational material ranging from the underlying validity of the concept through very specific examples of healthy-eating educational materials for staff, clients and donors. (See Food Distribution Section)

Several food banks have reported their boards have created Food and Nutrition committees. The ED of a Greater Pittsburgh credits this committee with bringing the issue of nutrition and healthy eating to the strategic planning process and ultimately getting it into the organization’s strategic plan. The Food and Nutrition Committee comprised of staff, board members and volunteers, “. . . was smart enough to know what the pieces were that can be chewed and swallowed. They brought things to the organization gradually to accept and take on.

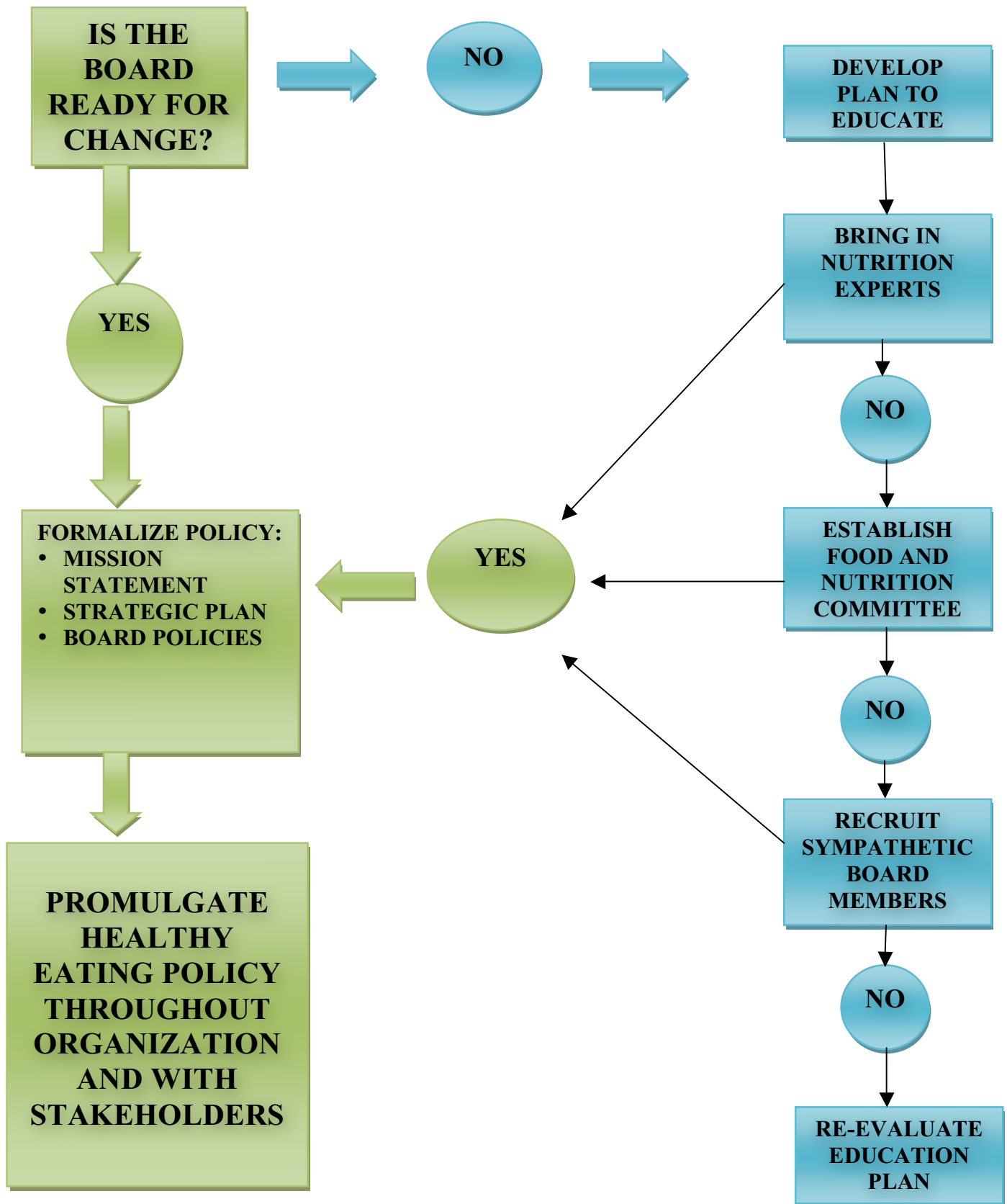
“We include nutrition goals in our strategic plan – setting targets for a percentage of food to be nutritious each year. There was a lot of resistance to the change, eating is a very emotional issue! We include our focus on providing nutritious food when asking for funding. Once the ‘obesity epidemic’ hit national media and awareness, it reinforced the arguments we were making and helped to change the minds of some of those who were resistant.”

Ideally, a food provider can follow an organizational change process that starts with board education, evolves to a full board commitment, and coalesces with formal adoption of this new vision. The board’s intention to fully integrate the change gets reflected throughout the organization in its mission statement, strategic and annual plans, job descriptions, newsletters, signage, all education materials, and most importantly, in the training of staff and volunteers.

Summary of Organizational Change Process

- Assess the receptivity of the organization to the healthy-eating change
- Determine if board is ready to formalize through the mission statement, or board policy.
- If the board isn’t ready to formalize, see if board chair will be your ally in preparing the board for educational session(s)
- Get a healthy-eating expert to make a presentation(s), e.g., university researcher, well-respected nutritionist, public health official, etc.
- If possible, recruit nutrition expert to the board
- Create a Food and Nutrition Committee
- After the education session(s), ask the board chair to make a formal policy supporting the change.
- If it is not possible to get board to sign off on a policy, see if the board will have some language recorded in the minutes that gives a general approval for moving ahead.
- Use the healthy-eating language in as many documents in the organization as possible, e.g., strategic plan, job descriptions, operations manuals, etc.

Flow Chart for Organizational Change Obtaining Board Commitment



Note: These organizational steps are not mutually exclusive. They represent some possible paths to the goal of obtaining a board commitment to healthy eating/ nutrition programming.

Toolkit

Introduction

The purpose of the Toolkit is to provide resources to assist organizations to move toward a deeper organizational commitment to more nutritious, healthy eating. Samples include excerpts from mission statements, job descriptions, and strategic plans that reflect the organizational change.

Examples of Mission Statements that reflect a commitment to nutritious/healthy eating (excerpted from 2007 MAZON Survey of grantees)

- The Food Bank of Central New York is a not-for-profit organization working to eliminate hunger through nutritious food distribution, education and advocacy in cooperation with the community. Our strategic plan is a child of that statement and all goals and objectives are subservient to this philosophy.
- Food for People is working to eliminate hunger and improve the health and well-being of our community through access to healthy and nutritious foods, community education, and advocacy.
- FoodLink of Tulare County is committed to ending hunger by providing healthy food and nutrition education to those in need through community involvement.
- To alleviate hunger by providing nutritious food and nutrition education to people in need, educating the public, and promoting public policies that address hunger and its root causes services.
- Our mission is to help improve the quality of food and the food security of County residents in need, without regard to race, national origin, religion, gender, disability, medical condition or age, and to work as anti-hunger advocates at local, state and federal levels.
- Our mission is to educate and involve individuals to end hunger and alleviate malnutrition in our communities.
- We procure nutritious food and distribute it to individuals and families who are in need.

Relevant Job Description Excerpts

- Chef: Responsible for all aspects of preparing nutritious, good-tasting, well-presented, creative meals for homeless and low-income guests in a free Dining Room serving approximately 2,600 meals per day
- Nutrition Education Coordinator: Coordinates Nutrition Education Program; assists with the development of educational materials for the public; teaches classes to Latina women about nutrition education, budgeting and smart shopping; reviews current research on obesity and hunger issues in the US for incorporating into local public education and awareness programs
- Community Outreach Coordinator: Educates the community about hunger issues; build a healthier hunger-free community

- Nutrition Educator: Educate food-assistance recipients and pantry staff on the importance of making healthy-food choices to increase their knowledge and consumption of nutritious foods available from the Food Bank; schedule and/or organize nutrition education programs; provide recipes and general nutrition information for various Food Bank programs; maintain accurate records of nutrition education programs; Associate's degree in Nutrition
- Nutrition-Marketing Supervisor: Oversee the development and implementation of nutrition services and education; educate food assistance providers and their clients on the importance of making healthy food choices and increase their knowledge and consumption of nutritious foods available from the Food Bank; educate food assistance providers in planning their food acquisition to optimize both the quantity and the quality of the food they offer; supervise nutrition staff for the efficient, ongoing operation of nutrition services , education programs, and materials; market and implement Choose Healthy Options (CHOP) Program to improve nutrient quality of foods acquired and distributed; conduct outreach to food assistance providers by facilitating nutrition workshops for pantry network members and providing training for cooks at congregate feeding sites, on recipe development, meal planning and safe handling practices to ensure effective agency education; respond to nutrition information requests by providing accurate and appropriate information, creating recipes, and making referrals

Excerpts from Strategic Plans

Project MANA

- To continue providing quality food distributions for our clients.
- Fresh fruit, vegetables, and dairy products will be provided at every distribution.
- Fresh fruit, vegetables, and dairy products will be available and provided for our clients in our home delivery program (FACE).
- We will do our part to combat the obesity epidemic by limiting the amounts of foods we distribute that are high in fats and sugar.
- We will improve and implement our assessment system so we can better identify the needs of our clients and ensure they are getting the nutrition they require.
- Purchase produce from wholesalers and supplement with rescued produce from farmer's markets.
- We will maximize community resources by utilizing our refrigerated truck for food rescue from farmer's markets and all food vendors.

Strategies

- Provide a six-week nutrition education course annually for children 0-5 and their caregivers.
- Provide a six-week nutrition education course annually for second grade students in the elementary schools

- Provide a six-week Kids Can Cook course annually for fourth and fifth graders.
- Provide nutrition, smart shopping, and budgeting courses for adults for six weeks annually (Dar Luz).
- Provide instruction in nutrition education for “dental *promotoras*” in Kings Beach.
- Maintain community gardens for demonstration and teaching purposes in Incline Village, Kings Beach, and Truckee.
- Participate in the nutrition coalition for the North Shore of Lake Tahoe.
- Provide supplemental nutrition education when opportunities arise, through venues such as Girls on the Run, Slow Foods, etc.
- Distribute education materials at food distributions on nutrition, budgeting, smart shopping, food safety, and other relevant topics

FoodLink for Tulare County

Goal: By 2012, FoodLink will be providing a minimum of 500,000 lbs of fresh produce per year to Tulare County food distribution agencies

Objective: Train agencies how to use fresh produce

Objective: Maximize local fresh produce donations

Goal: Sustain FoodLink’s nutrition education program

Goal: Reinforce FoodLink’s commitment to nutrition education

Goal: Bring in additional community members to complement FoodLink’s nutrition education

Alameda County Community Food Bank

- Increase Procurement and Distribution of Food While Maintaining High Nutritional Component, with Emphasis on most at risk: Children & Seniors
- Measurable Goal: Maintain percentage of nutritious food at least 70 %