Working Together to Address Hunger:

Food Pantry Partnerships Project Report

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INTRODUCTION

In 2008, Denver-area food pantries sounded warning bells: shelves were bare and families were going hungry. After hearing from our community partners, The Denver Foundation sprang into action by mobilizing the Critical Needs Fund to meet these urgent community needs. The Fund provided several rounds of grants to hunger relief organizations between 2008 and 2011. During this time, The Denver Foundation deepened its commitment to addressing hunger and learned more about challenges facing the Metro Denver food pantry system.

Local food pantries continued to be overwhelmed and stretched thin, and the Foundation believed that the organizations could improve services to the community through focused collaboration. So, in 2011, the Foundation joined with several generous anonymous donors and piloted the Food Pantry Partnerships Project (FP3). FP3 was initiated to support developing food pantry collaboratives working together to do things they could not do alone, becoming more efficient and effective, and creating a shared learning environment. We believe in collaboration and the potential it offers to address disparities and change seemingly insurmountable challenges. We also understand that collaboration is difficult and requires ongoing reflection and learning to achieve new outcomes.

Through this innovative project, The Denver Foundation hoped to learn more about how collaboration benefits pantries, clients, and the community. The Denver Foundation believes the knowledge and insight gained by both the pantries and our foundation during the Food Pantry Partnerships Project may be useful to other agencies interested in collaboration. This report shares lessons learned, the inspiring achievements of the collaborative projects, and the challenges encountered and overcome.

The Denver Foundation is grateful to the generous donors who made this project possible. We thank lead Project Consultant Denise Clark for her dedication. Without her hard work and genuine commitment, the project would not have been possible. Recognition also goes to the OMNI team, which provided evaluation support to the pantries that was adaptable to the pantries’ needs. Finally, we express our deep gratitude to the staff and volunteers of the collaborative pantry partners who devoted countless hours to work together to strengthen emergency food systems and meet the needs of the hungry in their communities. We continue to be inspired by their work, and we feel honored to have had the chance to support their ongoing efforts. This project has reinforced our dedication to collaboration.

David Miller
President and CEO

Jeff Hirota
Vice President of Programs
THANK YOU

The Denver Foundation is deeply grateful to the anonymous donors who generously provided funding to support the innovative work of the Food Pantry Partnerships Project. We also express our gratitude to the people whose hard work and dedication made the Food Pantry Partnerships Project possible. Without their efforts, the project would not have happened. Some of the people have retired or moved on to other agencies, but they were integral to the success of this project. Thank you!

Project Consultant: Denise Clark

Evaluators: OMNI:
  Jim Adams-Berger
  Chandra Brojde
  Alexa Cares
  Jen Denious
  Rashaua Esposito
  April Hendrickson
  Jen Hooks
  Laura Landry

Food Pantry Partnerships Project Grantees:
Denver County: Food Exchange Resource Network - FERN
  Denver Inner City Parish (Lead Agency)
    Adrian Castro
    Todd Clough
    Larry Martinez
    Brandi Miller
    Carlo Nieto
  Community Ministry
    Jerry Docherty
    Joyce Neufeld
  His Hands Christian Ministries
    Johnny Davis
  Crossroads of the Rockies
    Jennifer Kendrick
    Bob Smith

Jefferson County: Jefferson County Mountain Area Partnership - JCMAP
  Mountain Resource Center (Lead Agency)
    Mary Alice Cohen
    Jayne Norton
    Sharon Schrage
  Evergreen Christian Outreach
    Lynn Kutalek
    Jim Shelton
    Sharon Smith

Jefferson County (continued)
  Deer Park United Methodist Interfaith Pantry
    Janet Mizelle
    Ingrid Wilson
  St. Laurence Episcopal Church
    Nina Churchman
    Jeanne Gibbard
    Stan Johnston
  Friendship Baptist Church
    Judy Gray

Boulder County: Boulder County Collaborative - BCC
  Sister Carmen Community Center (Lead Agency)
    Suzanne Crawford
    Sarah Jenson
    Sarah Nelson
    Ruth Perry
  Emergency Family Assistance Association
    Elizabeth Freedman
    Liz Rowland
  OUR Center
    Veronica Orona
    Edwina Salazar
    Rick Reiten

Other Partners:
Hunger Free Colorado: Kathy Underhill and Bob Overstreet

Food Bank of the Rockies: Janie Gianotsos and Cindy Mitchell

The Denver Foundation: Monica Buhlig, Sarah Harrison, Jeff Hirota, Holly Kingsbury, Adrienne Mansanares, Alma Martinez, and Oz Spies
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Collaboration is a process by which groups come together, establishing a formal commitment to work together to achieve common goals and objectives."

– Pulling Together Tool, National Association of City and Country Health Officials

Following three years of grants for frontline organizations serving the hungry through its Critical Needs Fund, The Denver Foundation recognized an opportunity to support more than just food pantries’ pressing needs to stock their shelves. The emergency food delivery system was straining, and it seemed that, by working together in new and deeper ways, food pantry collaboratives could become stronger and better meet community needs. The Denver Foundation initiated the Food Pantry Partnerships Project (FP3) with a Request for Proposals released in March 2011, and grants awarded several months later. The Foundation’s hope for FP3 was to foster local demonstration sites that, through collaboration, would 1) change the way emergency food is obtained and provided; 2) improve food pantry operations; 3) use more client-centered approaches; 4) offer more nutritious food; and 5) provide opportunities for shared learning.

The Denver Foundation funded three separate formal food pantry collaboratives to initiate changes in the delivery of food and advance the use of best practices within the emergency food delivery system. The three collaboratives spanned the Metro Denver area: Food Exchange Resource Network (FERN) in Southwest Denver, the Jefferson County Mountain Area Partnership (JCMAP), and the Boulder County Collaborative (BCC). Each of these collaboratives was committed to doing work together that they could not do alone and demonstrated a focus on the collective benefit to the community as a whole.

“Solving today’s complex health and social issues effectively and equitably is beyond the purview of any one agency, organization, or discipline. Working cross-sectorally represents a key opportunity for communities to create significant, sustainable improvements in health and equity outcomes.” – The Prevention Institute, www.preventioninstitute.org

Over 18 months, FP3 grants covered minor capital costs, technology expenses, coordination, facilitation, evaluation, outreach, work with other pantries, operating costs, staff care, and the establishment of client-centered practices. The Denver Foundation also engaged a project consultant to lead and manage the project and evaluation consultants to support process analysis.
LESSONS LEARNED

FP3 provided opportunities for community organizations and The Denver Foundation to learn about collaboration within the context of emergency food provision. The 18-month process revealed several significant findings:

- **Collaboration is about relationships.** It is crucial to build relationships that include trust and commitment to a shared vision, one another, and the quality of the collaborative process to sustain the collaborative and yield outcomes. Because collaboration is so complex, it is important to **provide support to develop collaborative structures and processes** prior to formation and throughout the process. **Formalized, strong collaboratives**, via mechanisms such as a Memorandum of Understanding, are often better able to respond to emerging community needs, such as to a natural disaster or a sudden increase in demand.

- In addition to a shared vision, collaboration should begin with **shared goals and indicators of success**. These may change over time, but they are difficult to implement after work has begun. It is important to recognize that time, along with patience, is required for impact to emerge.

- **Collaboration is challenging.** It often **takes more time, resources, and financial investment than anticipated**. Flexible support, including grant dollars to support staff participation in time-intensive collaborative work and additional resources to support unanticipated needs that emerge during the project, is incredibly important. It is also important to recognize that unintended consequences of the work may arise (e.g., secondary trauma due to increased demand for services) for which support is necessary until systems are built to address these consequences.

- **No two collaboratives are alike.** They vary based on the collaborative’s development along a spectrum of maturity, trust among partners, the community and its assets, and operating mechanisms. Such variation requires different structures and support.

- The creation of a new collaborative **raises visibility of hunger issues in the community** and is associated with an increase in both clients and food donations. Additionally, feeding the hungry is often about more than simply feeding the hungry. The expansion of a pantry’s capacity results in an increased demand for other client support services.

- The inherent **power dynamic between foundations and organizations** receiving funding is complex and ever-present. Even in a shared learning environment, this dynamic plays a significant role in the foundation-community relationship, which is important for all participants to recognize.

- **Successful collaboration is good for clients, pantries, and the community.** The outcomes justify these investments of time, money, and other resources, especially when the effort leads to improved services for the hungry.
COMMUNITY IMPACT

The broader scale, community-wide impact of the FP3 participants will undoubtedly become more apparent over time, as the collaboratives continue to develop and work in the community. However, after the first 18 months, community benefits are already visible:

- **Funded collaboratives improved the way emergency food is delivered in their communities.** They implemented the more culturally responsive client choice model and increased availability of fresh produce.

- **Collaboratives found shared efficiencies.** Two pantries combined into a single larger pantry, nonprofits saved money on office and storage space costs, partners worked together to solicit donations and train volunteers.

- **The opening of the FERN warehouse and a new food pantry in a previously under-served neighborhood provided a first-time opportunity for residents to have convenient access to emergency food services.** This Southwest Denver warehouse and pantry have filled a gap in the surrounding community and brought hope to residents.

- **The Mountain Resource Center in Conifer served as the Disaster Recovery Center during the North Fork Fire.** The power outage that resulted from the fire caused many residents to lose all of the food in their refrigerators and freezers. The Conifer community and JCMAP partners came together, and the MRC pantry received an abundance of donated food so they could keep the devastated families fed. The impact of the fire raised community awareness of the importance of emergency food distribution and how a multi-service resource center (counseling, food, clothes, etc.) and its collaborative partners can play a vital role in a community crisis.

- **The increased demand for food in Conifer (from 1,294 to 3,230 client visits in less than a year) has compelled the Mountain Resource Center to reach out to the community for help.** Several unique partnerships have been established as a result of this increased need. The local Jazzercise center donates toilet paper for the pantry so there is always a steady supply; the Rotary Club collects fresh produce and brings it to the pantry on Tuesdays; Panera donates bread once a week; and Safeway donates a variety of food items on a weekly basis. This reliable systemic approach toward supplying the pantry is a model approach toward giving.

- **The Boulder County Collaborative strengthened its efforts to more efficiently and effectively serve their respective communities.** They worked as a team to formalize their already thriving partnership, develop strategies to educate the community about the needs of their target population, improve their shared policies and procedures for ordering bulk food, and improve communication regarding local sales on products that could be purchased given available funds. By working together in the spirit of partnership and honoring their shared values, BCC believes that not only will the people who come to their pantries benefit, but the greater community will be positively impacted as well.

"Clients at all of our pantries have expressed feeling empowered because of the client choice model. It helps achieve the primary goal of promoting our clients’ freedom of choice, dignity, respect, and self-sufficiency."

- **Boulder County Collaborative**
FOOD PANTRY PARTNERSHIPS PROJECT SUMMARY

The Denver Foundation’s Food Pantry Partnerships Project (FP3) officially launched in July 2011 and ended in February 2013. The project began with a Request for Proposals (RFP) in mid-2011.

In response to this Request for Proposals, The Denver Foundation received a total of nine collaborative proposals, of which three were funded. A volunteer committee and Denver Foundation staff reviewed the proposals and conducted site visits. The three collaboratives selected for funding were all committed to doing work together that they could not do alone, and demonstrated promising opportunities to change and improve emergency food delivery in their respective communities. They demonstrated a focus on the collective benefit to the community as a whole, beyond the benefits receiving a grant might provide to their individual organizations, and went far beyond simple referral partnerships.

These three collaboratives, consisting of 12 pantries total, included the following Metro Denver leaders:

1. **Denver County: Food Exchange Resource Network - FERN**
   - Denver Inner City Parish (Lead Agency)
   - Community Ministry
   - His Hands Christian Ministries
   - Crossroads of the Rockies

2. **Jefferson County: Jefferson County Mountain Area Partnership - JCMAP**
   - Mountain Resource Center (Lead Agency)
   - Evergreen Christian Outreach
   - Deer Park United Methodist Interfaith Pantry
   - St. Laurence Episcopal Church
   - Friendship Baptist Church

3. **Boulder County: Boulder County Collaborative - BCC**
   - Sister Carmen Community Center (Lead Agency)
   - Emergency Family Assistance Association
   - OUR Center

The three collaboratives were established to improve emergency food delivery systems, increase efficiency of pantry operations, adopt more client-centered approaches, provide more nutritious food and provide opportunities for shared learning within communities and across communities. The proposed grant goals, based upon each collaborative proposal, were as follows:
Food Exchange Resource Network’s (FERN) goals were to: 1) create a shared-space warehouse to serve as a major food distribution center; 2) increase storage capacity and the amount and variety of foods available to the hungry; 3) share food inventory and other resources with pantry partners; and 4) implement a client-choice model at all partner pantries.

The Jefferson County Mountain Area Partnership (JCMAP) was formed to: 1) merge two pantries into one expanded, client choice pantry; 2) create a centralized storage facility to manage food inventory; 3) strengthen the infrastructure of their existing pantry coalition; and 4) support pantry volunteers who provide food to the community.

The Boulder County Collaborative (BCC) grant was used to: 1) strengthen its current collaboration efforts by supporting facility improvements to institute the client choice model and improve food acquisition at all three pantries by identifying shared outcomes and service strategies related to food purchasing and distribution, financial assistance, and self-sufficiency.

Project Costs and Grant Awards

Each project received an initial grant at the start of the project. Based on needs that emerged throughout the collaborative process, additional responsive funding was also provided. Details of that funding are included in Appendix C.

The table below summarizes the funding awarded to each collaborative:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FERN</th>
<th>JCMAP</th>
<th>BCC</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Requested Funding</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>$14,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Staff</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>Secondary Trauma Training</td>
<td>3,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Roundtable Gift Cards</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indicators of Success (repurposed)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOU and Operating Agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Funding</td>
<td>$108,600</td>
<td>$46,750</td>
<td>$38,819</td>
</tr>
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Other Project Costs – Consultants

The Denver Foundation encouraged the collaboratives to set aside funding in their project grant budgets to hire an outside facilitator to help manage group planning and decision-making processes. All three collaboratives utilized the expertise of an outside consultant during the project.

The Denver Foundation contracted with the lead project consultant, who was responsible for monitoring the project goals, outcomes, and lessons learned and for leading all project activities. The Foundation also contracted with the OMNI Institute to provide consulting, facilitation, training, and evaluation services. The total FP3 consultant costs were $59,622. These costs were larger than those initially anticipated by The Denver Foundation, in part because of staff transitions at The Denver Foundation that increased the need for project consultant services.

The Denver Foundation’s total FP3 investment was $253,791. This figure does not include meeting expenses, Spanish-speaking interpretation, catered meals, or the event to celebrate the work of the pantries in this project.
## Timeline

The project included the following activities:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Kick-Off Session and Orientation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Regular Onsite Conversations</strong></td>
<td>These conversations, held two to three times over the 18-month period, were facilitated by the project consultant and tracked each collaborative’s progress, including successes, challenges, and needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peer Learning Circles</strong></td>
<td>Peer learning circles were used to create a community among all pantries in which participants could share successes, challenges, and resources, set goals, take action, and learn from each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online Collaboration Survey</strong></td>
<td>As part of the project evaluation, a collaboration survey was developed by the Project Consultant to assess collaborative change through pre- and post-tests to understand the growth and progress of each collaborative. As partners did not find it to be useful, the survey was conducted once toward the beginning of the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborative Progress and Final Reports</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Project Closing Celebration Event</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client Roundtable Discussions</strong></td>
<td>Facilitated pantry client roundtable discussions were done at partner pantries in January and February 2013 to understand client perspectives regarding their pantry experience, the quality and quantity of food received, and areas for improvement in operations and/or service delivery. This data informed program improvements and developed stronger client relationships. A summary of these findings is included in Appendix B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client Feedback Database</strong></td>
<td>The Client Roundtable Discussions emphasized the value of client feedback for both individual pantries and the collaborative. The collection of these results by OMNI led to the development of a Client Feedback Questionnaire and Database pantries could use on a regular basis to inform their work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES, AND LESSONS LEARNED

Following is a summary of the achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. For an even more detailed version with achievements and challenges specific to each collaborative, please see the Appendix A.

Achievements

- These three food pantry collaboratives have created innovative partnerships focused on shared food acquisition, joint storage space, and combined programming. Each partnership offers models and lessons that can be of benefit to hunger relief organizations.
- Creating formal collaborative structures, such as Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and shared vision statements, and deepening the informal relationships and trust so critical to collaboration, were major achievements for the partners. Such work created a solid foundation that allowed groups to advance their goals and improve services in the community.
- The client choice model, in which food pantry customers select their own food rather than receive pre-packaged boxes, was implemented at the majority of partner pantries.
- One collaborative worked to create a new pantry in an underserved community, while another collaborative merged two pantries into one full-service, client choice pantry.
- The creation of shared storage facilities, including one 15,000 square foot warehouse, was a major achievement for partners. This allowed them to reduce waste and accept larger donations they previously could not take – such as 10,000 ears of corn.
- Changes were made that better met the needs of customers: expanded hours, increased access to fresh foods enabled by additional refrigeration and freezer space, and the creation of friendly and more welcoming pantry environments.
- Collaboratives were able to save time and money by working together: efficiencies included reducing overhead, storage, and distribution costs; conducting shared training for volunteers; conducting shared customer needs assessments; acquiring staple foods together through joint purchasing and joint donation drives. For example, one partner organization saved 56% in office/warehouse space costs; another collaborative was able to respond to a rapid turnaround required for TANF dollar expenditure because of the existence of their collaborative.
- Partners saw increased customer visits, and also increased donations. One collaborative had over 2000 more visits in 2012 than in 2011.

Challenges

- An uncertain economy, funders’ shifting priorities, and cuts to programs like Emergency Food and Shelter presented ongoing challenges.
- Staff transitions and changes, both within the Foundation and among collaborative partners, led to communication breakdowns and associated confusion.
- Finding the staff time to participate in the collaborative was an ongoing challenge for organizations and staff who were working hard to advance their individual organization’s missions at the same time.
- The collaborative work led to more donations, and to more customers in need of food and other supports. These increases often stressed the partner organizations.
- While the partner organizations and the funder learned together in ways that were different for both groups, the inherent power dynamic between funder and grantees was ever-present.
Lessons Learned

- For all involved, collaboration took more time and money than anticipated, from partner pantries to foundation staff and consultants.
- Formal collaborative structures are keys to success, and the creation of such agreements and processes requires money and/or time.
- Working toward a shared vision with mutual trust is a foundational element of successful collaboration.
- Sustaining a collaborative requires ongoing, regular attention from the participants.
- Training and mentoring are important ways to support the development of collaboratives and guide the implementation of client-centered practices.
- Collaboratives are affected by the ever-changing funding environment and evolving customer needs, and must work to be nimble to respond to these changes. It’s important for partners, especially funders, to remain flexible whenever possible.
- Communication, even what seems like over-communication, within collaboratives and between a funder and collaboratives, is one way to avoid confusion and mistrust.
- Take the necessary time at the front-end to establish solid structures, such as shared outcomes and indicators, establishment of a baseline, measurement and learning protocol, roles and responsibilities, and MOUs.
- There is value to conducting initial, and then periodic, assessment, of the process and functioning of a collaborative over time. This assessment in itself can be an outcome worth recognizing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Denver Foundation is confident that the many lessons learned from this project can help other foundations and community organizations interested in pursuing in collaborative projects. The Foundation’s top recommendations to funders and nonprofits considering collaboration are as follows:

Foundations

*Project Structure:* Provide a thorough orientation process for grantees. The orientation process should set clear expectations of grantees, present the foundation’s project goals and desired outcomes, define roles and responsibilities, establish communication and accountability agreements, and allow time for socializing and relationship building. Most importantly, the foundation’s expectations of grantees regarding the time it will take to participate the scheduled grant activities must be communicated – even over-communicated – consistently in person and in writing. With clear communication at the beginning, grantees will be able to better prepare for the journey upon which they are embarking.

*Grants:* Use a phased or tiered grantmaking process that allows collaboratives the flexibility to request and receive funding at different stages of the collaborative project to meet their “real-time” needs that are often natural outcomes of a truly collaborative process.

*Project Management:* Designate one person from each collaborative to serve as a point person or liaison to work with the project lead to help with grantee communications,
scheduling, problem solving, and accountability. The grantee liaison and the project lead from the foundation should be consistent throughout the project.

Training and Technical Assistance: Utilize content experts at the beginning of the project, and throughout as needed, to provide “how to” trainings on various topics related to forming a successful collaborative. Provide funds to hire consultants/facilitators to provide technical assistance and guide processes such as developing an MOU, resolving conflict, building trust and respect, etc. The foundation should allow each collaborative to hire the consultants/facilitators of their choice.

Infrastructure: Provide grantees with a set of best practice tools and templates to support the development of policies, procedures, and other guiding documents for their collaboratives.

Sustainability: Include in grantee expectations that each collaborative must create a development plan before the end of the grant period which includes both fundraising and infrastructure to maintain new processes. Provide funding for the collaboratives to hire a fundraising consultant to lead this process.

Shared Learning: Foundations should prioritize the value of shared learning, both across grantees and between the foundation and grantees. Recognize the inherent, and ever-present, power dynamic and try to minimize it when possible so the project can be meaningfully informed through learning. However, do not assume which shared learning activities will work best for the group (e.g., peer learning circles). Work in partnership with grantees to develop the most appropriate process for creating a shared learning environment. The learning can lead to a focus on that which is most important and effective, and minimize distractions.

Mentoring: Provide funding for organizations involved in well-established and successful collaborations to serve as mentors/experts for the start-up collaboratives. Host panel discussions or set up one-on-one collaboration mentor/mentee relationships.

Indicators of Success: Include in the Request for Proposal an evaluation expectation that requires grantees to participate in identifying and measuring shared indicators to demonstrate the effectiveness of the collaborative’s work and impact on the client outcomes. Consider identifying those indicators the foundation needs at the outset to inform the work itself and assess outcomes of the project, and spend time communicating why specific pre-set indicators are important.

Patience and Commitment: As mentioned above, collaborative work is challenging, and it takes time to lay a strong foundation before other project and client-level outcomes are realized. Remain patient while also evaluating the process itself.
Ongoing Documentation: At the outset and throughout the project, build in the collection, sharing and documentation of lessons and stories. Because there are many unanticipated outcomes of this work, it is important to note that which is happening, both “small” and “large” and “good” and “bad” to help the project to impact the organizations directly involved as well as those who could benefit from learnings in the future.

Community Organizations

Volunteers: Develop and implement a structured volunteer training program, especially if the formation of your collaborative involves program or service delivery changes that will impact volunteers at the organization(s).

Capacity: Assess the readiness and ability of your organization to participate in a collaborative grant project. Is your organization stable in terms of leadership and finances? Is your board behind the initiative? Can you make staff time available? Do you have the ability to take on the additional responsibilities? Is there flexibility in the budget to respond to unanticipated expenses related to the collaborative? How might a community crisis impact your organization’s capacity to participate?

Accountability: Appoint a member of your collaborative to help other members with commitments and follow through. Use peer-to-peer accountability to help your collaborative succeed.

Unintended Consequences: Engage in best and worst case scenario planning to prepare for the unexpected (e.g., the impact of significant increases or decreases in demand caused by things such as a natural disaster or increase in needs of the clients). Strategize how your collaborative will respond and develop a protocol to follow to successfully respond to the unexpected.

Time: Work with your mentors to set realistic expectations on the amount of time it will take to establish a collaborative. Don’t underestimate the number of hours it will take.

Listen to Clients: Create client feedback systems and take time to listen to your clients. Ask for their input and ideas on an ongoing basis. Clients feel valued when asked to contribute and being heard helps with their dignity and self-respect. Your pantry will benefit from this process, and you might even be surprised about what you learn.

Patience and Commitment: As mentioned above, this type of collaborative work is challenging. It takes time to lay a strong foundation before other project and client-level outcomes are realized. Remain patient while also evaluating the process itself.
CONCLUSION

The Food Pantry Partnerships Project was a first-time venture and uncharted territory for The Denver Foundation. One of the primary goals was a desire to learn side-by-side with pantries and share that learning with the community. This project created a tremendous opportunity for everyone to learn and grow together—pantry staff, project staff, key stakeholders, and the Foundation. The lessons learned are many, and more than we had hoped for. The Foundation will take to heart these important lessons to more effectively manage and coordinate our next collaborative grant project. We are hopeful that the pantries will reflect on their own lessons learned and how these might influence future partnerships, while continuing to learn and grow with their current collaborative partners. We remain deeply committed to shared learning, and engaging in and supporting collaboratives working to address tough social problems.

At this final stage of the Food Pantry Partnerships Project, one question that should be posed is, “Given everything that The Denver Foundation has learned, would we do it again?” The answer is, “Of course!” The Denver Foundation is interested in supporting other collaborative grant projects in the Denver Metro area. We are willing to take what we learned from the Food Pantry Partnerships Project to shift our direction as needed, build on what worked and fine-tune what didn’t work, and try different approaches to support the formation of successful collaboratives. We know that along with the missteps, there are “aha” moments—and we are grateful for these moments and take the lessons seriously. Through initiatives like the Food Pantry Partnership Project, The Denver Foundation is committed to becoming an even better partner with the community.
Appendices

APPENDIX A – Detailed Achievements, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Following are the detailed achievements, challenges, and lessons learned for the three collaboratives as documented by the project consultant and the collaboratives themselves. Lessons learned specific to The Denver Foundation also follow here.

Food Resource Exchange Network - FERN

FERN Achievements
1. Leased a 15,000 square foot warehouse and acquired necessary equipment to transform a vacant building into an operational food distribution center and collaborative office space.
2. Developed a mission and vision, core values, Memorandum of Understanding, warehouse policies and procedures, and license agreements for FERN.
3. Developed a unified team or “family” of pantry partners that meets monthly to discuss ways to expand and improve client services, procure more nutritious food, and engage in joint activities to achieve the collaborative’s mission.
4. Implemented client choice shopping model at all FERN pantries.
5. Established an improved system and procedures for interagency referrals.
6. Staggered pantry hours to offer food to clients five days per week. Procured more nutritious and staple foods as a result of the collaborative.
7. Pursued new opportunities for increased food donations not previously possible due to the lack of warehouse space. For example, with the new warehouse in place, FERN successfully distributed over 10,000 ears of corn in 2012. Prior to setting up the warehouse, FERN pantries would have not been able to accept a donation of that size.
8. Built and maintained new relationships with food suppliers resulting in increased amounts of fresh food available for clients.
9. Reduced overhead, storage, and distribution costs for all collaborative pantries. The shared warehouse allowed a few pantries to get out of higher-priced leases. (For example, prior to joining FERN, the Broadway Assistance Center paid $1,500/month for office/warehouse space. They now pay $657/month for office/warehouse space, a 56% cost savings.)
10. Decreased food waste and increased food inventory by developing and implementing new food sharing structures.
11. Met on a regular basis with pantry partners to discuss client choice best practices, fundraising opportunities, client trends, challenges, and the ongoing development of the collaborative. These meetings helped to make all FERN pantries stronger agencies.
12. Increased the number of clients served by opening a new pantry at the FERN warehouse, located in a neighborhood not previously served.
13. Added three new pantry partners during the grant project: Broadway Assistance Center, Father Woody’s, and Bienvenidos Food Bank.
14. Strengthened the pantries’ operating efficiencies, which improved the level of satisfaction of each partner.
15. Hired a new Denver Inner City Parish staff member to aid in food management and warehouse resource development.

FERN Challenges
1. Creating a new staff position at DICP to aid in food management and resource development for the warehouse was not sustainable. The Denver Foundation supported the position with a $15,000 grant, but the staff member was laid off less than nine months after hire.
2. Finding the time to carry out the work of the collaborative and participate in the many different grant activities was difficult and required a lot of staff time, decreasing their capacity to fulfill their day-to-day responsibilities. For example:
   a. The warehouse lease and logistics took longer and required more staff time than anticipated. Researching best prices and purchasing the equipment took longer than anticipated.
   b. The development of operating procedures and management of warehouse logistics took more time than envisioned.
   c. The process to obtain food took more time than expected. As with other donations, food procurement requires relationships, which take time to develop.
3. Transporting large shipments of food has been an ongoing issue because the FERN vehicles are not large enough to collect all food offered. Food donations are often turned away because of the lack of adequately sized vehicles for pick up. The loss of one of FERN’s original partners, Crossroad of the Rockies, due to unforeseen leadership transitions and capacity issues.
4. Hiring an outside attorney to help draft organizational documents created temporary conflict. The work style and approach of the attorney was not a good fit for the pantries.
5. Ensuring the long-term viability of FERN. The pantries lack time and needed expertise to create a business plan that focuses on sustainability.
6. The new collaborative often distracted each pantry from addressing the existing challenges within their own organizations.

**FERN Lessons Learned**

1. Collaboration is not as easy as the pantries thought it would be, and it is most effective among organizations with a shared vision.
2. It takes more time to do things as a group than as individual organizations.
3. Services and operations must be defined and implemented before publicizing the formation of the collaborative to friends, patrons, vendors, and the community.
4. The assistance of an outside facilitator to help develop guiding documents and keep meetings on track was critical to the success of the collaborative.
5. Compromise and flexibility are essential when the needs and desires of pantries are sometimes at odds with one another.
6. The ability to focus on the best interests of the collaborative, as opposed to the best interest of the individual pantries, was essential to FERN’s success.
7. The cost of establishing FERN was greater than expected. In order to meet all expenses associated with the establishment of the collaborative, the lead agency, Denver Inner City Parish, was required to invest over $50,000 in the project.
8. The entire effort took more work and more meetings than the collaborative initially envisioned.
9. Food donations didn’t just “pour in” simply because FERN created a warehouse space with increased storage capacity. It takes time to build relationships with food vendors and to conduct outreach in the community.
10. Hard work, time, and commitment contributed to developing positive relationships and building trust within the collaborative.

**Jefferson County Mountain Area Partnership - JCMAP**

**JCMAP Achievements**

1. Improved service delivery efficiency by closing the St. Laurence Episcopal Church pantry in Conifer and merging into one full-service, client choice pantry at Mountain Resource Center (MRC) to increase ease with which people could access the food they need. Prior to combining the pantries, Conifer clients had to navigate protocol and geographic obstacles to access food. Their choices were:
a. To schedule an appointment with a volunteer at St. Laurence pantry, which created additional planning and schedule coordination; or
b. To travel over 30 miles round-trip to get food at Evergreen Christian Outreach pantry, which required using limited financial resources for gas.
2. Expanded the small, emergency food storage space at the MRC from a 150 square foot closet to an 800 square foot client choice pantry.
3. Converted the closed St. Laurence pantry into a centralized, shared storage facility for JCMAP partners.
4. Raised awareness of hunger issues in the community, resulting in an increase in food donations and people served. In 2011, the MRC food pantry had 1,294 client visits. In 2012, they had 3,230 visits, a 150% increase.
5. Developed a client referral protocol and form to address client overlap and minimize service duplication.
6. Overcame long-term pantry turf issues, such as donor loyalty and making referrals to families that existed prior to the formalization of the collaborative.
7. Established new and deepened existing relationships with funders who are eager to support and invest in the pantry. Funders have stated that the warm and welcoming atmosphere of the MRC food pantry makes them want to be a part of the effort.
8. Organized a food sharing system allowing JCMAP partners to benefit from large food donations.
9. Expanded each pantry’s hours to meet the needs of more clients in a timely manner.
10. Increased clients’ access to fresh foods by equipping the Mountain Resource and Interfaith pantries with new refrigerators and freezers.
11. Worked with a facilitator to conduct a client needs assessment and focus groups to identify areas for improvement, expand services, and better understand the food needs of a rural community.
12. Established a structured volunteer training process and learning groups to clarify roles, bring new volunteers quickly up to speed, and prepare them to respond to community disasters.
13. Created a friendly and supportive pantry environment to welcome clients and ease feelings of shame or disgrace often experienced by clients, especially first-time clients. Many clients who visited the Mountain Resource Center pantry during the past year had never needed to visit a food pantry before. The atmosphere of the pantry is critical to its reputation and success in the community.

**JCMAP Challenges**

1. Finding the time to carry out the work of the collaborative and participate in the many different grant activities was difficult and required a lot of staff time, decreasing their capacity to fulfill their day-to-day responsibilities. For example:
   a. Researching and purchasing new refrigerators took more time than expected.
   b. Transitioning 40-50 clients to be served by their neighborhood pantry versus the pantry they had been visiting prompted unanticipated turf issues with overlapping service areas. The process took a lot of time, trust, and nurturing of relationships.
2. Working with volunteers who were not properly trained and unsure of their roles.
3. Responding to the increase in demand during the North Fork Fire created short-term capacity problems for the pantries.
4. Understanding the unintended consequences of feeding greater numbers of people and their multiple needs. When the new client choice pantry opened at the Mountain Resource Center, the staff and volunteers did not predict that people coming to the pantry would have so many additional needs. The capacity of the organization did match the demand for support services.
5. Defining the roles and responsibilities of each partner at the beginning of the grant project to help with the shift from an informal to a formal relationship.
6. Losing one of the collaborative’s original grant partners, Friendship Baptist, due to multiple leadership transitions. Over time, Friendship Baptist lost interest in the collaborative.
7. Ensuring the long-term viability of JCMAP is critical to its success. The pantries had not focused on this when the collaborative was meeting in a less formal capacity.

**JCMAP Lessons Learned**

1. If someone is hungry, then inevitably, it means they have multiple needs. The pantries had to assess their capacity (staffing, funding, accessibility, etc.) to address client needs and ensure they were able to serve the whole client or make appropriate referrals when necessary.
2. Successfully building and maintaining relationships in a small community is different than in a larger community. It takes more trust patience, and time.
3. Even with the best intentions, collaborative partners may experience resistance and a lack of trust. For example, the JCMAP pantries expressed feeling overwhelmed with the number of families they were trying to serve. However, when it came time to pool resources to serve them, these same pantries were concerned that they would lose families as clients or that the other pantries wouldn’t adequately meet the families’ needs.
4. To be most effective, volunteers need training, structure, and guidance. This is especially important when pantries are changing their food distribution model.
5. Formalizing an informal collaborative allowed the pantry partners to respond more swiftly and efficiently to victims of the North Fork Fire.
6. Strengthening the infrastructure of the collaborative and raising community awareness of hunger in the community are directly proportional to an increase in the number of clients served and food donations received.
7. Developing an MOU was much harder and took more time than anticipated.
8. Evergreen Christian Outreach (EChO) serving as a mentor pantry for the Mountain Resource Center helped both pantries become better pantries. By exploring best practices and reflecting on how to enhance the experience of clients, organizations learned from each other and developed a mutually beneficial and respectful relationship.
9. Implementing the client choice model and “ChooseMyPlate” food-categorizing system provide the opportunity for clients to learn more about healthy foods and nutrition.
10. Collaboration keeps pantries fresh. Even the more well-established pantries should rethink how they operate and be willing to learn how to improve.

**Boulder County Collaborative - BCC**

**BCC Achievements**

1. Made structural/material improvements at each BCC pantry.
2. Worked with an outside facilitator to identify common outcomes and service strategies for the three pantries involved in the collaborative.
3. Implemented a shared data benchmarking and evaluation process to assess the impact of food on clients’ self-sufficiency over time.
4. Worked with a facilitator to develop a Memorandum of Understanding and Food Pantry Operating Agreement—much needed infrastructure documents for the collaborative.
5. Instituted the client choice shopping model at all three BCC pantries.
6. Served as a resource for FERN and JCMAP when they were transitioning to a client choice model.
7. Increased their ability to respond to a quick expenditure of extra TANF funds by having the collaborative in place.
8. Formed stronger relationships and built trust among the three collaborative partners.
9. Cultivated relationships and improved communications between pantries by meeting on a regular basis as a team.
10. Acquired main staple foods because of the collective work of the collaborative.
11. Established systems for joint purchasing, information and product sharing, and executing a more proactive (less crisis-response) method for ordering of food.

**BCC Challenges**

1. Figuring out how the operational staff would interface with the executive staff. The executive staff members were more focused on developing policy and exploring shared outcomes versus increasing efficiency and improving client services.
2. Losing federal Emergency Food and Shelter funding for the purchase of food.
4. Relying on food drives to fill the gaps.
5. Ensuring that the pantries are prepared for possible disasters.
6. Understanding the structure of the Food Pantry Partnerships Project and which staff should have participated in the different grant activities.
7. Maintaining clear lines of communication among the collaborative partners and all staff participating in the project as well as with external organizations.
8. A staff member at one BCC organization accepted a new position at another BCC organization, which was an unexpected circumstance for the collaborative. While staff turnover and transition is common in nonprofits, it can be a more delicate situation within a collaborative, especially in smaller communities.

**BCC Lessons Learned**

1. It is critical that all partners in the collaborative are equally passionate about the end goal.
2. Meeting and talking more often as a collaborative generates good ideas and better results. If the Boulder County pantries had kept doing things the same way (e.g., not talking with each other), then things were unlikely to get better.
3. Collaboration is good for the community as a whole and saves money and resources. This project gave the previous collaboration a boost of new energy and hope.
4. Utilizing the services of an outside facilitator is well worth the financial investment. It helped the collaborative focus its conversations and reach important agreements.
5. To keep the “harder to come by” food items on the shelves, BCC had to learn that they needed to focus on a more sustainable method of checking prices and ordering in bulk.
6. Understanding which staff members should have participated in the scheduled grant activities and open lines of communication would have improved their experience with the project.
7. The delay in federal funds for food has made it much more challenging for pantries to purchase food.
8. Collaboration takes a lot of time and planning, but in the end, there is always at least one powerful thing to walk away with.

**The Denver Foundation - TDF**

**TDF Achievements**

1. Providing this grant funding to a pilot project, in partnership with generous anonymous donors, was a unique offering at The Denver Foundation that helped us to learn further about something that is a commonly recommended approach within the field.
2. While resources were limited, The Denver Foundation was glad to offer some additional funding to support emerging needs during the 18-month-period to increase sustainability.
3. The Foundation feels honored to have helped catalyze the impacts achieved in the community detailed earlier in this report.
**TDF Challenges**

1. Staff transitions and changes in responsibilities impact project management, communication, and cohesion. During the Food Pantry Partnerships Project, The Denver Foundation lost the lead project manager to maternity leave. The project consultant was able to step up and fill an expanded role, but the transition was challenging and caused some confusion with the pantries. This experience taught us that it is best for the project manager to be consistent throughout the entire project. Also, pantries experienced their own staff transitions, which were not always communicated to The Denver Foundation, and impacted project cohesion. Both the Foundation and grantees must take responsibility for sharing changes in staffing and bringing new pantry staff up to speed on the grant project structure and activities.

2. The peer learning circles lost their vigor. The peer learning circles were strategically and enthusiastically designed as one of the main activities of the Food Pantry Partnerships Project. The goal was to create a safe and confidential space for pantry partners to come together on a regular basis to report on their progress, share ideas and resources, and learn together. Typically, peer learning groups have a set agenda designed to help people solve problems and make progress toward their goals by getting and giving feedback, holding each other accountable, and encouraging members to share ideas and learning. Over time, the purpose of the peer learning circles shifted and lost focus, contributing to dissatisfaction among the pantries, and only one of the collaboratives consistently used the peer learning circle tools. Because the collaboratives were so different, the participants did not find the peer learning circles helpful. The Denver Foundation optimistically saw the peer learning circles as an opportunity to help shift the collaborative mindset from transactional to transformational. Unfortunately, the pantries saw them as another unproductive meeting.

3. Grant activities take longer and cost more than initially envisioned. Ultimately, all of the grant activities and efforts to establish the collaboratives, from incubation to MOU creation to food procurement, took more work, time, and money than anticipated. In the end, we learned that the time commitment expectation of the collaboratives was disproportionate to the size of the grants. The entire grant project itself could have easily been extended beyond 18 months.

4. A lack of clearly defined roles leads to miscommunication and confusion. The Denver Foundation convened the entire group of agencies listed above at the project kick-off to clarify the different responsibilities and define roles, including who holds decision-making authority (funding, project changes, etc.). However, misunderstandings occurred throughout the project. In hindsight, the Foundation could have provided grantees with a project “org chart” and an overview of job descriptions. Additionally, the grantees need to be provided frequent opportunities to ask questions for clarification. The Denver Foundation now understands the importance of consistently and frequently communicating, even over-communicating, the roles of each participant throughout the grant project.

**TDF Lessons Learned**

By debuting this innovative project, The Denver Foundation was interested in learning how collaboration benefits pantries, clients, and the community. The Foundation also wanted to know, “If we were to offer a similar project in the future, what would we do differently? What worked and what didn’t? What did we learn by doing this project?”

The Denver Foundation believes that the knowledge and insight gained during the Food Pantry Partnerships Project will be useful to other agencies interested in collaboration. The lessons learned highlighted in this project by The Denver Foundation are as follows:

1. Focus the first two to three months of the grant project on grantee orientation, training, and relationship building. The early stages of the project should include structured time devoted to developing positive relationships, building trust, and helping grantees understand the scope and
goals of the project. The Denver Foundation should share project goals and desired outcomes, and the project lead from The Denver Foundation should visit each participating organization at the beginning of the project. Taking the time to ensure everyone is one the same page is critical to building successful partnerships. Additionally, the grantees need opportunities to get to know each other and develop relationships with each other that will enhance their experience both during and after the grant project.

2. The Foundation cannot assume that grantees know “how to” collaborate or why they should collaborate. All of the collaboratives mentioned during the course of the project that collaboration is much harder than they would have ever imagined. Training for grantees on the foundation of collaboration and collaboration best practices should be offered at the onset of any project requiring organizations to collaborate.

3. Establish a shared data collection process as a primary component of the project. There are several important data collection components that are better addressed at the beginning of the project. These include gathering an accurate baseline that’s common across partners, establishing shared indicators of success, and agreeing on shared tools for collecting data. At the beginning of the project, the consultant attempted to do an assessment of the strengths of the collaboratives, but the participants did not find this valuable. By the end of the project, it was clear that this information should have been better used to inform how the collaboratives progressed. It also could have been used to inform the development of the collaboratives throughout the project. Also, approximately one year into the project, The Denver Foundation asked the pantries to identify shared indicators of success. This was too late in the process, and this component would’ve been best included as part of the initial project structure. In addition, the process of identifying the shared indicators needs to take into account each collaborative’s stage of development and the relevance of the indicators for individual pantry partners. At the end of the project, pantries were provided with a tool to collect client satisfaction, which was identified as a strong tool to inform business practices over time. This proved to be a useful tool and needed assistance, but could’ve occurred earlier in the process.

4. Provide even more flexibility in the grant making structure. The Food Pantry Partnerships Project offered one grant at the beginning of the project. The size and scope of each grant varied according to grantees’ budget requests and the limitations of the foundation’s resources. During the project, two of the three collaboratives requested more than one budget adjustment, revealing how difficult it can be to estimate the costs of new and ambitious collaboration projects. Traditionally, The Denver Foundation supports budget adjustments, and this was allowed for in this project. Additional costs emerged over time, and the Foundation found when it asked, “What additional resources would be most useful right now?” important opportunities for additional support were revealed.

5. Have consistent expectations of all grantees. At the onset of the Food Pantry Partnerships Project, The Denver Foundation established different expectations with the collaboratives based on the size of grant awards. This impacted one grantee’s connection to and understanding of the project. When possible, all project grantees should be required to meet the same set of expectations. The Foundation should balance this with flexibility and responsiveness to the unique needs and gifts of each collaborative.

6. The grantor-grantee power dynamic has a real bearing on relationships and grantee expectations. The Foundation and the project consultant could have more effectively articulated and emphasized the project consultant’s role in making funding decisions. In addition, it is a simple and understandable fact that “money matters” to grantees. The Foundation wanted to partner with the grantees to support the success of their collaboratives—and this did occur on a certain level (see JCMAP’s notable quote). However, when push comes to shove, The Denver Foundation is the funder, and this creates an inevitable power dynamic. When the collaboratives needed or expected more, the Foundation was the one with the checkbook, and the power dynamic affected relationships and candor.
APPENDIX B – Client Roundtable Summary

Client Roundtable Discussions

The project consultant facilitated discussions with clients of nine of the food pantry partners. A total of 82 clients – 56 women and 26 men – participated in the roundtable discussions. Fifteen of the 82 clients were Spanish-speaking and participated with the support of an interpreter. The main purpose was to talk directly with clients to learn about their pantry experience, the quality and quantity of food received, and areas for improvement in operations and/or service delivery. The information gained from these discussions was used to make program improvements and nurture relationships with clients.

Ultimately, at the end of this project, a survey was developed for pantries to use on a periodic basis to continue to collect client feedback. Pantries used a standard set of questions and also identified a few pantry-specific questions to guide their work moving forward. It is important to provide the structure for client feedback and the internal organizational processes to collect this information so it can be easily used to inform ongoing work.

The roundtable discussions were lively, educational, and conducted with the utmost respect for clients. Many clients who participated commented on feeling proud to have been asked to be a part of the conversations.

The questions asked to guide the roundtable discussions included:

1. When you first arrive at the food pantry, what do you notice? What is the experience like for you?
2. How would you describe the way you are treated at the food pantry?
3. How do you feel about the quantity and types of food given?
4. Are there other foods you would like to receive?
5. How do you feel about the way food is offered to you?
6. If you have been coming to the food pantry for more than one year, what changes, if any, have you noticed about the type of food available and how it is offered?
7. How important is it to receive foods that are nutritious?
8. If the food pantry were able to add new services, what type of service(s) would make the biggest difference for you?

Overall, the clients who participated in the roundtable discussions had overwhelmingly positive things to say about the pantries where they get food. Please note: Client comments have been consolidated anonymously to maintain confidentiality.

- All clients reported that they are treated with dignity and respect at the pantries they visit.
  - “Everyone here is warm and friendly.”
  - “The people who work here make us feel good.”
  - “I don’t get embarrassed when I come here.”
  - “We are not treated as if we are in the “line of shame” when we are waiting to get our food.”
  - “We feel the warmth and love of the people who work and volunteer here.”

- All clients expressed sincere appreciation for being able to select their own food items.
  - “I really like that I can make my own food choices.”
  - “We take what we need and leave for others what we don’t need.”
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- “When you are unemployed your dignity is taken away, so being able to shop for food helps to restore our dignity.”
- “Because of the circumstances in our lives, our choices are already limited, so being able to make choices about our food helps with our self-respect.”
- “We are “offered” food versus being treated like we are “begging” for food.”

- All clients agreed that having access to nutritious food is essential to their health and shared their appreciation for the amount of fresh produce and healthy food available.
  - “We get food here we would never be able to afford on our own. A lot of it comes from Whole Foods, and I’ve never even been in a Whole Foods!”
  - “We are able to eat healthier by coming to the food pantry.”
  - “I think it matters to the community that is donating that the food we receive is good for us.”
  - “Nutritious food is more expensive, so by providing it here, it helps to augment my budget so I can eat healthier.”
  - “Please keep the fresh produce coming!”

- Most clients believe that the amount and variety of food they receive is sufficient.
  - “I always get the amount of food I need.”
  - “There is always a lot of variety at this pantry.”
  - “As a single parent, the amount of food given here is the most I have ever seen at a pantry.”
  - “It would be nice if the pantry was able to provide an additional gallon of milk for households with children.”
  - “We would like more meat, dairy products, fresh produce, and staple foods.”

- Some of the pantry clients commented on the problem with expired dates on food items.
  - “Some of the dates on certain foods are expired.”
  - “Getting out-of-date foods is something we have to pay attention to.”
  - “I don’t feel like I can complain about expired foods because beggars can’t be choosers.”
  - “I get worried that I could get sick when I see the expired dates on dairy products in particular.”
  - “If I go home with expired food items, I will call the manufacturer and request a coupon (e.g., Pedialyte).”

- Clients at all nine pantries commented on the benefits of additional services offered to them by the pantries.
  - “I am homeless and really appreciate being able to shower and do my laundry at this particular pantry.”
  - “The hot meals here are great, especially on a cold day.”
  - “Being able to get toiletries and household goods is helpful.”
  - “The cooking classes they offer have been helpful and fun.”
  - “The holiday meals and baskets are incredible.”

- All clients expressed the need for other types of support services.
  - Bus tokens and gas vouchers
  - Medical bills, prescriptions, and dental care
  - Assistance with application processes such as food SNAP, LEAP, and WIC
  - Rental deposits and utilities
  - Food delivery for homebound clients
Clients shared additional thoughts at the end of the roundtable discussions.
  o “This is a safe space where I feel equal and not less than.”
  o “When I applied for food stamps, I was told to get a divorce and sell my house so I could qualify.”
  o “It would be nice to come together with other pantry clients to exchange ideas for getting help and assistance.”
  o “When the pantry makes decisions (e.g., frequency of visits), it would be nice to understand why the decisions have been made.”
  o “The experience of coming to a pantry for the first time has given me a different perspective on life.”
  o “For every poor family, there is an even poorer one.”
  o “None of us thought when we were younger that this is where we would be in our lives. I didn’t say as a child, when I grow up, I’m going to go to a food pantry.”
  o “It was nice to be asked to give our input. Thank you.”

For the consultant managing the Food Pantry Partnerships Project, the Client Roundtable Discussions were the most impactful of all the project activities. There is tremendous value in creating a safe space to listen to the individuals and families being served by pantries and to recognize the value of their ideas and experience. Nothing is more eye opening than a conversation with fellow community members who are hungry and simply need compassion, support, and kindness to be able to eat.
APPENDIX C - Additional Funding

During the 18-month grant period, each collaborative identified additional funding needs. The Denver Foundation awarded additional grants to each collaborative supporting a variety of needs: Special Collaborative Projects, Client Roundtable Discussions, and the measurement of Indicators of Success.

Special Collaborative Projects
- FERN lacked the infrastructure needed to support planned warehouse operations, so they received funds to hire a new staff person to manage the collaborative project and focus on the procurement of food and in-kind donations.
- When pantry staff expressed feeling overwhelmed by the unanticipated increase in demand for support services among new clients, JCMAP received funds for secondary trauma training for Mountain Resource Center staff.
- BCC received funding to work with OMNI Institute, a Denver-based evaluation and research firm, to analyze its Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) data across the three participating pantries. They also received funding to hire a facilitator to help them develop an MOU and Operating Agreement.

Client Roundtable Discussions
- Each pantry received $600 to purchase grocery store gift cards for each client who participated in the client roundtable discussions held at the end of the project.

Indicators of Success
- To determine the impact and effectiveness of FP3, each collaborative was asked to identify three “indicators of success” to demonstrate whether their collaborative was making a difference for clients and advancing their work to address hunger. Three common indicators were identified by the three collaboratives: client demographics, client satisfaction, and procurement and distribution of nutritious food.
- OMNI was also hired by The Denver Foundation to work with each collaborative to develop an evaluation system to measure the selected indicators. As part of their research process, OMNI conducted focus groups with each collaborative. These focus groups revealed the pantries preferred to focus on one indicator—client satisfaction. The Denver Foundation agreed to support this request. The collection of client demographics will be incorporated into this process, and The Denver Foundation will revisit the measurement of nutritious food at a later time.
- Each collaborative was awarded $3,000 to cover the hidden costs of staff time required to develop a system to measure the indicators of success. Both FERN and JCMAP requested the $3,000 be repurposed to meet more urgent needs. FERN needed stackable storage bins and lighting for the warehouse. One of the JCMAP pantries, Interfaith Pantry, was in critical need of a new refrigerator and freezer. The Denver Foundation approved both requests, recognizing that the daily needs are not immediately met as client satisfaction is adopted.
APPENDIX D – Future Directions

The three collaboratives that were formed and enhanced as a part of the Food Pantry Partnerships Project are hard at work meeting the needs of the hungry and will continue to collaborate to advance their work on hunger. One of the questions asked of the collaboratives on their final grant report was, “Where do you see the collaborative in three to five years? What excites you about the future?” The collaboratives’ responses to these questions are highlighted below.

**Food Exchange Resource Network - FERN**
FERN believes that in the next three to five years, their collaborative has the potential to become a national model for other pantries to replicate. They will be a fully self-sustaining collaborative supported by a wide range of agencies. They will brand FERN as a leader in food distribution to the hungry and make the public more aware their mission and services. More agencies will have joined the collaborative and FERN will be recognized as the cost-effective storage and distribution center for small food banks in the Denver Metro area. They will offer a wider range of food options, including a greater variety of nutritious food such as meats, fruits, vegetables, and options for clients with severe food allergies. The pantries involved in FERN will coordinate the hours so they are able to provide food to clients seven days a week, 365 days a year. They hope to open more food pantries in under-served Denver neighborhoods and aspire to offer a mobile food pantry for shut-in clients.

**Jefferson County Mountain Area Partnership - JCMAP**
JCMAP is committed to raising awareness of hunger in the community and increasing involvement in meeting the needs of the hungry through produce drives, focused school drives, and engagement of community groups. They would like to explore new ideas to involve and educate the public on hunger in their community. They are interested in working with local schools to help administrators, teachers, and students understand the issue of hunger and how the schools can help. A unique service offered by JCMAP’s pantries is the distribution of firewood for clients to heat their homes. They would like to coordinate a firewood donation program that replicates what they have successfully done with food donations. They will work to expand food resources further south toward Fairplay, an underserved community that needs more food pantry services. JCMAP sees itself maintaining its relationships with other Food Pantry Partnerships Project collaboratives to continue to build on what has been learned and support each other’s work to fight hunger. If possible, they would also like to be a part of The Denver Foundation’s ongoing work to support the use of best practices at food pantries. JCMAP is most excited about for the future is seeing more and more clients moving toward self-sufficiency.

**Boulder County Collaborative - BCC**
BCC envisions a well-established, thriving collaborative working together to order and trade food and strategically address issues with the local food bank. They hope to be issuing common reports on their use of best practices and the impact of their food programs on client and community self-sufficiency. Their hope for the three to five year future is that the need for food will decrease, and their pantry partners will witness individuals and families achieving greater or complete self-sufficiency.

**The Denver Foundation**
The Denver Foundation is committed to continuing to advance collaborative work and to learning from this work. This work, if supported and implemented well, will yield greater outcomes than any one organization can accomplish individually. We recognize the value of individual nonprofit organizations, and we also believe in the value of collaborative work. We are committed to supporting both as we address challenging social issues, which include those in the areas of Basic Human Needs, Education, Economic Opportunity and Community Leadership. We are committed to being partners with nonprofit organizations and learning with others in the field to jointly address complex issues and priorities.