



Key Insights from Early Adopters of the Food Security Solutions (FSS) Prioritization Process

HUNGER FREE NORTHBROOK

HungerResource
Network



Step 3: Estimate Values

As part of Step 2 of the **Food Security Solutions (FSS) Prioritization Process**, Hunger Free Northbrook generated a list of suggested solutions to the question, “How can we help alleviate hunger in our community?” The Advisory Panel, which included key community members, leaders and stakeholders, identified which suggested solutions were the most feasible. These suggested solutions moved forward into Step 3, estimating the costs and expected benefit, or impact, of each one.

Estimating the costs was a challenge, particularly when no benchmark data was available. For example, one suggested solution included providing printed nutrition education. But difficulty estimating the rate at which the material would be distributed interfered with estimating printing costs.

One participant shared how difficult it was, as a volunteer organization, to conduct the formative work needed to estimate costs of a new program when the cost was truly unknown. “The process of getting the info would have been time consuming — to speak with them and have them understand what we were asking and have them give us numbers.” They thought that process would involve too much time and effort.

In situations such as these, the financial knowledge and experience of the advisory panel and partner organizations were called upon to provide the best information possible. The **Financial Estimates Worksheet** documented the estimated costs as well as possible in-kind contributions, such as reusable shopping bags and volunteer hours, for each suggested solution.

The **Impact Score Worksheet** lists key criteria, as identified by subject matter experts, to assess for each suggested solution. However, evaluating those criteria were challenging for this group, which collectively had little formal public health or nutrition training. Since

“Choosing which Food Security Solution to allocate resources to is like trying to choose between having an apple or an orange for snack – either seems worthy in the fight against hunger! However, limited resources necessitate prioritizing the one most likely to meet the local need at the current time. Systematically assigning ‘Estimate Values’ ensures a transparent, evidence-based approach for making such decisions.”

- Hunger Free Northbrook Team

A **registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN)** from the community with public health nutrition training can provide assistance with the FSS Prioritization Process. Use the “Find an Expert” tool to locate an RDN at www.eatright.org/find-an-expert.



the FSS Prioritization Process is flexible and can be adapted to fit any local context, the group devised an alternate but deliberate and less formal process to determine the impact score. While generally considering the impact score criteria and the marginal analysis for each solution (i.e. the impact of the suggested change), the group engaged in an open discussion and then voted on which solutions provided the best value for the resources required. Because this process was less objective, it could have been more open to bias; however, by applying the same approach to every suggested solution, bias was reduced and, ultimately, this approach worked for this group. The goal of the Impact Scores, to objectively compare one suggested solution to another, was achieved.

Because of their collective expertise and knowledge of the local community, the group felt there was little risk that the estimates generated were off base. Their high confidence was reflected in the low total Uncertainty Score documented on the **Uncertainty Score Worksheet**. For example, the risk that the true impact on food insecurity would be significantly less than what was expected was almost always rated zero (i.e. high confidence in the prediction). In contrast, for one suggested solution involving starting an online community calendar, the risk that it would turn out to be much more difficult to implement than the group predicted was thought to be high and was given a rating of 3 (i.e. no confidence/significant uncertainty in the prediction).

Suggested solutions without enough information to estimate cost or impact were then filed away for future consideration. This organically narrowed the list even further. In the end, Hunger Free Northbrook estimated values for seven suggested solutions and moved them forward to the final step: Prioritization.

Key Insights on Step 3 from Hunger Free Northbrook

If the advisory panel finds the criteria for estimating impact or uncertainty to be too technical for the level of expertise of its members, a more general, discussion-based approach may be appropriate. To minimize bias, key considerations must be determined before scoring any suggested solution and the same criteria must be applied to each one.

In Preparation – Assembling an Advisory Panel

There is no better resource for the prioritization process than the collective knowledge and experience of the advisory panel. Hunger Free Northbrook's core planning team or advisory group included the Hunger Resource Network president and several members of its executive board, plus a member of the executive board of the Alliance to End Hunger, a key supporter and advisor for this work. Then, support was sought from three key stakeholders: the supervisor of the local food pantry, the president of the Chamber of Commerce and the village president. Finally, these leaders recommended other community members to invite into the effort.

Use the "In Preparation – Assemble an Advisory Panel" document posted on www.eatrightFoundation.org/FSSToolkit, under "Additional Resources" to find guidance on how to identify key stakeholders and extend an invitation, an example timeline and clarification on roles and responsibilities.

Hunger Free Northbrook is part of the **Hunger Resource Network**, a local, all-volunteer, nonprofit organization dedicated to helping alleviate hunger in the greater Chicago area. Learn more at www.hungerfreenorthbrook.org.

Find the **Food Security Solutions Prioritization Toolkit** at www.eatrightFoundation.org/FSSToolkit or email FSS@eatright.org