



**RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY
FOOD BANK**

Strategic Plan 2017 – 2019

Introduction

We are pleased to present our new strategic plan, the product of a comprehensive, year-long planning process. At the outset of this process, the Board of Directors and staff at the Food Bank re-visited the principles and beliefs that guide our work. We reached consensus on five core values: **compassion, fostering health, innovation, collaboration and accountability**. These five values say a great deal about who we are and how we plan for the future.

- We know that poverty is the root cause of hunger. We serve the poorest people in the state at a time when Rhode Island has the highest poverty rate in New England (14.3%), with even higher rates of poverty among African Americans (20.6%) and Hispanics (31.0%). Out of compassion, our priority is to feed everyone who needs food and feed them well.
- We also know that hunger is harmful to health. Food insecurity contributes to illness and disease, particularly among children and senior adults. To foster health, we promote good nutrition and partner with health care providers to reduce food insecurity.
- We know that no one is ever just hungry. Hunger is a sign of scarcity and hardship. We want to find innovative ways to address the multiple problems faced by food insecure families and create a gateway to other services that will increase self-sufficiency.
- We know that our ability to feed everyone in need depends on strong collaboration between the Food Bank and our member agencies. As food donations decrease from a more efficient food industry, we will be challenged to keep up with the demand. We must work together to maintain access to food assistance throughout Rhode Island.
- We know that ending hunger has wide appeal. Our mission unites diverse groups of people and inspires thousands of Rhode Islanders to donate their time, energy and money to help others in need. We remain accountable to the public, earning the public's trust every day by demonstrating outstanding service and the most productive use of resources.

The Strategic Planning Process

The Strategic Planning Committee met in March 2015 to design and set the timeline for the planning process. Then, in June 2015, the entire Board of Directors participated in a visioning session. A focus group was also held with the Agency Advisory Committee to assess the main challenges facing our agency network. Over the following summer, the senior management team prepared a Strategic Planning Briefing Book to outline the major trends affecting our work. The Briefing Book raised six key questions:

- How should we direct limited resources?
- Will member agencies be able to sustain their work?
- Who are potential new partners that can extend our reach?
- What programs should expand and scale-up?
- What is our role in advocacy?
- Can we do more to prevent hunger in Rhode Island?

The Board addressed these questions in several subsequent meetings, culminating in a Board retreat in February 2016. The retreat focused on developing the broad goals for the plan.

Along with the Board, Food Bank staff members have been actively involved in the planning process. Managers and directors met to redraft our core values. A smaller group, including the senior management team, Director of Agency Services, Director of Communications and Director of Annual Giving, worked together to revise the mission and vision statements. The mission, vision and core values were then reviewed and approved by the Board.

We thank the members of the Strategic Planning Committee, listed below, for their leadership in directing the planning process:

Jim Bussiere, Chair
Kate Brewster
Mary Flynn
Russ Partridge
Tanisha Simpson
Marilyn Warren
Chris Whitney

Vision, Mission & Values

Vision

We envision a state where no one goes hungry.

Mission

To improve the quality of life for all Rhode Islanders by advancing solutions to the problem of hunger.

Values

We believe in.....

- **Compassion:** We approach our work with empathy, understanding and respect for the diverse communities we serve.
- **Fostering Health:** We want all Rhode Islanders to have access to healthy food because good nutrition is essential for good health.
- **Innovation:** We are flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the community. We lead by finding creative ways to prevent and reduce food insecurity.
- **Collaboration:** We know we cannot end hunger alone. We succeed in partnership with others and strive to include a rich tapestry of voices in our work.
- **Accountability:** We deliver outstanding service and high quality programs, effectively and efficiently. We steward our resources with integrity and transparency.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives are intended to direct the Food Bank's work for the next three years. Annually, senior staff will prepare a detailed work plan with activities in support of each objective. The Strategic Planning Committee will monitor our progress in accomplishing these goals and objectives, while ensuring we remain on course to achieve our overall mission.

I. **Address hunger as a health issue.**

Food insecurity impacts the health of vulnerable populations, particularly young children and senior adults. Among Rhode Islanders receiving food assistance, 22 percent have a family member in poor health. By helping families access more nutritious food, we can improve health outcomes.

- A) Increase distribution of high quality, nutritious food.
- B) Promote more nutritious eating among those at high risk for health problems.
- C) Partner with health care providers to serve food insecure patients and their families.

II. **Partner with member agencies to meet the immediate need for food assistance and collaborate on innovative solutions to reduce the need.**

Despite an improving economy and declining unemployment in Rhode Island, the high demand for food assistance persists. Before the recession in 2007, member agencies of the Food Bank served 33,000 people each month. In 2016, the same network of food pantries and meal programs serves 60,000 each month. We will continue to work together to ensure that no one in Rhode Island goes hungry, while exploring ways to help food insecure families achieve self-sufficiency.

- A) Direct resources to support the largest member agencies and maintain access to food assistance across the entire state.
- B) Increase the supply of food to meal sites.
- C) Utilize new training methods to improve cultural competency and customer service.
- D) Pilot interventions aimed at increasing self-reliance among those seeking food assistance.

III. Inspire generosity among current supporters and attract a new generation of donors.

Rhode Islanders responded generously when the need for food assistance increased dramatically after the recession. The Food Bank's campaign to raise an additional \$500,000 for food acquisition succeeded due to generous individuals, foundations, civic groups and businesses. By comparison, support from the Rhode Island General Assembly was reduced by half to \$173,000 (less than three percent of our operating budget). We must renew our call for additional state funding, deepen the engagement of our current donors and broaden our appeal to new supporters.

- A) Create a new case for state support.
- B) Expand digital marketing and online fundraising.
- C) Partner with Board members in major donor fundraising.
- D) Reach out to young professionals and young families to increase giving in this age group.

IV. Build the Food Bank's capacity to measure and reward success.

Our major strength as an organization is our people: talented employees, dedicated volunteers and the thousands of individuals who operate our member agencies across the state. We want to recognize their outstanding contribution and further their commitment to our mission. We strive to become a learning organization, motivating everyone who works with us and continually assessing our effectiveness and efficiency in order to achieve the greatest possible impact.

- A) Create an incentive system to encourage outstanding employee achievements.
- B) Develop a new membership status for high performing agencies.
- C) Utilize performance benchmarking data to improve operations and fundraising.