

VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

Title: Produce Rescue VISTA – Montgomery County Food Bank (Assessment & Research Y1)

Sponsoring Organization: Feeding Texas

Project Name: Feeding Texas-Client Empowerment Corps

Project Number: 15VSWTX006

Project Period:

Site Name (if applicable): Montgomery County Food Bank

Focus Area(s)

Primary: Healthy Futures

Secondary: Capacity Building and Leverage

VISTA Assignment Objectives and Member Activities

Goal of the Project: 1)Begin to address the upstream causes (inadequate income) and the downstream effects (poor health) of food insecurity through new, nontraditional partnerships that provide access to education, cross-sector services, referrals, and nutrition to help break the cycle of food bank client needs rooted in poverty.
2)Strategically incorporate client voice through a client empowerment/storybanking project to ensure sustainability of services, build robust communication networks, reduce stigma, and increase participation to move more community members out of food insecurity and poverty. The VISTA project will assess process gaps and help build new strategies to increase access to produce for low income individuals to support better health outcomes.

Objective of the Assignment (60% of time to be spent on this objective)

Complete a process assessment in order to identify the needs of the food bank's Produce Rescue Center in order to meet goals for increased healthy produce availability for food bank clients.

Member Activities

1. Cooperate with supervisor and other staff and volunteers in the food bank and partner agencies to become familiar with the range of services available to clients through MCFB, as well as our internal programs like the Produce Rescue Center (PRC), the Produce Shelf- Life Extension project, and the Produce Pod.
2. Develop a research plan to guide a process assessment that includes goals and objectives of the research. Goals may include:
 - a) Identifying successes, challenges, and opportunities in the food bank's food rescue initiative, specifically in regards to the Produce Rescue Center.
 - b) Identifying existing models and best practices addressing areas related to assessment topics (food rescue, fresh produce distribution, mobile pantries, produce procurement, etc.). Identify models used within the Montgomery County Food Bank and by other organizations.
 - c) Documenting current partnership and/or process flows for effective review and evaluation, and for effective transition/legacy document maintenance.
 - d) Identifying the ideal produce to be distributed throughout various MCFB Programs, and methods to strengthen the Partner Agency ordering process.
 - e) Identifying current barriers to increasing overall produce outputs and potential opportunities for addressing them, as well as opportunities to use current strengths to increase overall produce outputs.
3. Complete and synthesize your research to develop recommendations on how to strengthen the Produce Rescue Center and food rescue process at MCFB. Make recommendations for action based on both established practices identified in research, sustainability practicality, and assessment of readiness and goodness of fit of all partners.
 - a) Provide supervisor with a formal report that establishes the problem, presents findings, justifies conclusions, and makes appropriate recommendations.
 - b) Propose necessary next steps to prepare for launch or further development of MCFB Produce Shelf- Life Extension project, as well as program sustainability.

Objective of the Assignment (20% of time to be spent on this objective)

Develop processes and methods of analysis for Produce Rescue Center, and food rescue program at MCFB.

Member Activities

1. Create a long-term plan of action, logic model, timeline, etc. to build guidelines for the project tasks, and descriptions of roles necessary to guide project success.
 - a) Identify what materials or resources are necessary to create or obtain for implementation, and means for obtaining them.
2. Conduct a SWOT or similar analysis for each potential produce output to provide individualized recommendations and plans for success.
3. Create an evaluation plan or outline to identify essential factors to be monitored over the life of the project or program.
 - a) Work with staff at the food bank, as well as Feeding Texas staff to ensure effective evaluation strategies and appropriate metrics are applied and the feasibility of evaluation practices for integrity of data.
4. Maintain clear and organized legacy documents throughout the service year to ensure processes are clear, replicable, and sustainable.

Objective of the Assignment (20% of time to be spent on this objective)

Engage community members and clients in client empowerment/story banking initiative to inform conversations around the causes and effects of food insecurity, and expand community knowledge and support for the anti-hunger efforts.

Member Activities:

1. Gather clients' input and stories through a statewide StoryBank Texas project.
 - a. Conduct individual interviews with clients to learn their story and get their feedback as appropriate on food bank programs, services, and potential partnerships.
 - b. Intentionally gather stories from diverse audiences in orders to diversify the stories in the story bank, especially focusing on rural areas.
2. Assess methods for seeking active client involvement and feedback in project design, implementation, and evaluation. Develop ways to include client voice during the service year. Work with the Client Voices Coordinator at Feeding Texas to develop appropriate questions and methods that will integrate StoryBank Texas activities into your work plan in a way that appropriately supports and feeds project activities.
3. Provide feedback to Feeding Texas on story banking initiative and client empowerment groups in order to identify challenges and best practices.
4. Develop tools and materials that are informed by client input, whenever possible.
5. Identify where inclusion of client voice is possible within food bank and the community.
6. Train staff, community members, and clients on new partnerships/resources/services and on story banking/client engagement techniques/efforts.