



Frequently Asked Questions

“Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System”

- 1. Why is Feeding America, with network engagement, updating its nutritious food framework, currently Foods to Encourage (F2E)?**
 - From F2E’s creation, the framework was expected to be updated periodically to adjust to new nutrition knowledge.
 - The new guidelines are a response to food bank requests for a more appropriate framework that aligns with the latest nutrition guidance and a tracking approach that results in more accurate and intuitive data.
 - There is a desire to create a common and standardized measure for evidence-based nutrition guidelines tailored to the unique needs and capacity of the charitable food system.
- 2. How were these new guidelines created?**
 - In 2019, Healthy Eating Research (HER), a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, convened a panel of experts from the charitable food system, nutrition, and food policy sector; the majority have experience with food banking.
 - The HER panel reviewed and analyzed numerous existing guidelines, including F2E, SWAP, CHOP, and industry standards.
 - The panel met nine times between February 2019 and January 2020; between meetings, panel members provided regular feedback via email and surveys.
 - The panel asked for feedback from the Nutritious Food Revisioning Task Force convened by Feeding America and comprised of 11 food bank representatives. The HER panel incorporated feedback from the Task Force into the final guidelines.
- 3. How is this new framework different from Foods to Encourage (F2E)?**
 - F2E classifies food bank inventory based on 31 product categories, 13 of which are considered F2E: cereal, dairy (30%), fruits, juice, meat/fish/poultry, non-meat protein, pasta, fresh produce, rice, vegetables, beverages (10% to reflect plain water), mix (60%), and salvage (39%).
 - The new framework, while still using the 31 product categories, will find ways to alternatively measure a smaller number of category groupings: (1) fruits and vegetables, (2) grains, (3) protein, (4) dairy, (5) non-dairy alternatives, (6) beverages, (7) mixed dishes, (8) processed and packaged snacks, (9) desserts, (10) condiments and cooking staples, and (11) other miscellaneous items. The framework ranks products as Choose Often, Choose Sometimes, or Choose Rarely based on category-specific thresholds for saturated fat, sodium, and sugar.
- 4. Will product from all source streams need to be ranked?**
 - Food banks may choose to apply these guidelines to a variety of product streams depending on your implementation level and strategic plans.
 - Product in Non-Food categories (i.e. Cleaning, Health and Beauty, Paper-Household, Paper-Personal and Non-Food), Pet, and Baby will be “Not Ranked.”
 - Product in Salvage/Reclamation product will be “Not Ranked,” though food banks with the capacity to do so may choose to sort and rank food product from this stream.

5. Are Feeding America network members required to adopt this new framework?

- No, the new guidelines are not a network requirement, and they are not part of the Feeding America member contract.
- We hope members will find benefit in the new guidelines and will be encouraged to adopt them. Having a common set of guidelines will allow for greater peer-learning across the network and can avoid food banks needing to create their own systems.
- Some food banks are already ranking food nutritionally and they can elect to continue using their existing ranking system or to adopt the new guidelines.
- Multiple implementation onramps will be available, and we aim to include some current systems such as SWAP (Supporting Wellness at Pantries) and Nourish as resources to help train and support other food banks to implement the new guidelines.

6. How soon will members implement this new framework?

- This is not a requirement, and a flexible implementation approach will be offered to support full network adoption. Our hope is that members will adopt, with Feeding America and peer support, the framework over the next five years.
- Several food banks have already started to explore and take initial steps to transition their food bank to using the HER Nutrition Guidelines.

7. With this new framework, what data will members need to report to Feeding America? How will members report differently if they choose not to implement this framework?

- The current plan from Feeding America National Office (FANO) is that food banks will still be required to report poundage through the Quarterly Poundage Report (QPR), including data by the 31 product categories. The default right now is no change in reporting, and the goal for the future is to require as few changes as possible to the QPR.
- Feeding America will continue to publish the current F2E report so the poundage will reflect the current F2E guidelines until we add the necessary questions in the QPR that will factor in the HER guidelines. If/when questions are added to the QPR, they would only be applicable to those food banks who have elected to adopt the new HER guidelines and are able to report such data.
- Over time, FANO will likely co-develop a new metric for Choose Often, Choose Sometimes, and Choose Rarely that will be added to the QPR in addition to overall pounds. We may also track the number of participating food banks, the system they are using to follow the guidelines, and other data beneficial to network interests.

8. What tools will be available to members to support the implementation of this new framework?

- In March 2021, Feeding America released the *Nutrition in Food Banking Toolkit*, a resource which aims to support food banks and food pantry programs as you work to address food insecurity and the overlapping challenges posed by structural inequities often preventing the selection and consumption of nutritious foods.
- The Toolkit – an evolving asset – is currently composed of three main sections, each focused on a different aspect of the charitable food system. [Healthy Eating Research \(HER\) Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System](#) provides recommendations to improve the quality of food in food banks and food pantries in order to increase access to healthier food for households experiencing. [Applying an Intercultural Competency Lens](#) provides insights and recommendations for developing nutrition-related intercultural competence at the organizational, partner and individual levels. [Role of Food Bank](#)

[Nutrition Policies: A Guide to Action](#) provides food banks with strategies to achieve nutrition policies that lead to a more nutritious food supply.

- Coming Summer 2021 will be additional sections, including but not limited to an implementation guide for food banks looking to integrate HER Nutrition Guidelines into food bank inventory systems (e.g., CERES and Primarius) and agency ordering platforms (e.g., Agency Express). Feeding America will also continue to explore and evaluate opportunities that remove barriers often limiting the selection and consumption of nutritious foods, and expand Feeding America’s [research](#) and [tools](#) supporting dignity, choice and “nutrition nudges” in pantries.

9. What training and grant funding will be available to member staff implementing this framework?

- In FY21, Feeding America awarded \$1.2 million dollars in grants to three dozen network member food banks to support the implementation of the Toolkit at the local level. These food banks will also be providing feedback on the existing Toolkit and forthcoming public Implementation Guide.
- Based on feedback, we plan to provide additional member grants – which include 1:1 technical assistance – and additional network-wide trainings regarding both *why* and *how* to rank foods using the new guidelines. The trainings will be tailored to various departments within a food bank such as communications, operations, procurement/sourcing, and partner programs.

10. How will this framework be optimized for existing inventory and ordering systems used by members (e.g., Ceres, Primarius, and Agency Express)?

- Training will include details and strategies for entering the nutrition ranking information (Choose Often, Choose Sometimes, or Choose Rarely) into inventory management systems.
- Food banks that currently use ranking systems (e.g., SWAP) and who use Primarius, Ceres, or other platforms will be encouraged to share their best practices and lessons learned with other food banks.

11. Who should I contact for more information?

- We welcome your thoughts and questions to this important, optional change for the network. Please email nutritionteam@feedingamerica.org and we will connect you with the appropriate subject matter expert.

Acknowledgements

Nutritious Food Revisioning Task Force

Feeding America

Adeana Osika, BSN, RDL, LD

All Faiths Food Bank, Sarasota, FL

Brandon Bartley

Hoosier Hills Food Bank, Bloomington, IN

Courtney Kennedy

Good Shepherd Food Bank, Auburn, ME

Danice Tatosian, CDN

Feeding Westchester, Elmsford, NY

Gayle Carlson

Montana Food Bank Network, MT

Jennifer Marier

Feeding America, Chicago, IL

Jeremy Arnold

Feeding America, Washington, DC

Jesse Baldwin

Roadrunner Food Bank, Albuquerque, NM

Jessica Hager, AM

Feeding America, Chicago, IL

John Nieman

Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana, Indianapolis, IN

Josh Wilcox

Foodlink, Rochester, NY

Junior Martinez

Feeding America, Chicago, IL

Katie Martin, PhD

*Foodshare's Institute for Hunger Research & Solutions,
Bloomfield, CT*

Katy Anderson

Roadrunner Food Bank, Albuquerque, NM

Laura Held, MS

Foodlink, Rochester, NY

Lauren Rhoades, MS, MBA, RDN

Food Bank for Larimer County, Fort Collins, CO

Michelle Hesse, PhD, RD

Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, Verona, VA

Stephanie Berno, RD, LD

Houston Food Bank, Houston, TX

Stephanie Zidek

Feeding America, Chicago, IL

Valerie Nicholson-Watson

Harvesters, Kansas City, MO

Healthy Eating Research Panel

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Hilary Seligman, MD, MAS

University of California, San Francisco

Marlene Schwartz, PhD

University of Connecticut

Mary Story, PhD, RD

Duke University

Megan Lott, MPH, RDN

Duke University

Ronli Levi, MPH, RD

University of California, San Francisco

Kirsten Arm, MPH, RDN

Duke Global Health Institute

Lauren Dawson, MPH

University of Minnesota School of Public Health

Emily Welker Duffy, MPH, RD

Duke Global Health Institute

Gerry Brisson, MA

Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeast Michigan

Elizabeth Campbell, MA, RDN

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Gayle Carlson, MAED

Montana Food Bank Network

Caitlin Caspi, ScD

University of Minnesota

Marla Feldman

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

Tracy Fox, MPH, RD

Food, Nutrition and Policy Consultants, LLC

Karen Hanner, MM

Feeding America

Amy Headings, PhD, RD, LD

Mid-Ohio Food Bank

Katie Martin, PhD

Foodshare's Institute for Hunger Research & Solutions

Ami McReynolds, MBA, MS

Feeding America

Mary Pat Raimondi Bertacchi, MD, RDN

Christina Roberto, PhD

University of Pennsylvania

Nancy Roman, MA

Partnership for a Healthier America

Jenna Seymour, PhD

*National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health
Promotion*

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention