Steps for Getting Started using SWAP in your Food Bank

In 2019, Healthy Eating Research (HER) convened a panel of experts to create clear, specific recommendations for nutrition guidelines tailored to the unique needs and capacity of the charitable food system. Feeding America National Office (FANO) is encouraging its network food banks to implement the guidelines in their inventory system by 2025.

SWAP (Supporting Wellness at Pantries) was developed in 2016 and revised in 2020 to align with the HER Nutrition Guidelines. SWAP is a series of tools and resources to help food banks and pantries operationalize the HER Nutrition Guidelines. The following readiness checklist is the result of a year's long pilot with eight food banks around the country who were implementing SWAP in their food banks.

*** **Please note**: *the following steps are not necessarily meant to go in order. Food banks will differ on their level of readiness, staff capacity, and departmental structures. Use the steps as a guide rather than a checklist.*

Preparation
Important steps to prepare for implementing SWAP at your food bank

Build support from food bank leadership.	Build support from key food bank departments and staff members who will be involved with nutritional ranking.
Discuss nutritional ranking with leadership and other key stakeholders and create an understanding of the link between hunger and health.	It is important to take the time to recognize the challenges each department or key staff members may face and to work together to identify strategies to address those concerns.

Key stakeholders

CEO   Board of Directors   COO

Departments to consider
- Nutrition Team
- Operations (Procurement, Sourcing, Receiving)
- IT or Data team
- Agency Relations/Programs

Available tools
- Evidence on impact of SWAP
- HER Nutrition Guidelines
- FANO Nutrition Toolkit
- SWAP Interactive Toolkit
- SWAP food bank video
- SWAP FAQs

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Create the infrastructure for SWAP rankings in your food bank's inventory system.

Work with relevant departments at your food bank to familiarize yourself with the inventory database to help identify how you may be able to integrate SWAP rankings directly into the inventory system and into your online ordering platform. Identify available fields that can be repurposed for SWAP rankings and create a plan for entering this information.

Available tool
FANO Nutrition Implementation Guide

Train relevant staff and/or volunteers to use SWAP.

Ensure that all staff and/or volunteers who will be part of the nutrition ranking process are trained on how to rank food using SWAP. Develop a plan for training additional staff and/or volunteers in case of turnover.

Available tools
- How to Rank Foods Using SWAP
- HER Nutrition Guidelines
- SWAP Calculator

Develop a strategic and sustainable process for ranking product.

Plan for the ranking process and figure out the easiest method for your food bank. Who will rank the food? Who will enter rankings into the inventory system? What foods will you start with and how do you plan to rank more product over time? Establish clear protocols and strong feedback loops to allow for flexibility and adjustments as you learn what is working.

Available tools
- SWAP Interactive Toolkit
- How to Rank Food Using SWAP
- FANO Nutrition Implementation Guide

Implementation
Key steps to begin using SWAP at your food bank

Begin ranking food.

Available tools
- FANO Nutrition Implementation Guide
- How to Rank Foods Using SWAP
- HER Nutrition Guidelines
- SWAP Calculator

Staff and/or volunteers start ranking product received at the food bank based on the strategic process you developed as you prepared for implementation. Build in feedback loops to identify inaccurate rankings and any trends in errors to help adjust the ranking process.

Set benchmarks to increase the percentage of Green and Yellow foods received at the food bank.

You can pull data from your inventory system and run reports to identify the baseline percentage of product received that falls into each SWAP ranking. This will help your team set benchmarks and goals for the coming year and inform strategies to reduce the amount of product ranked Assorted Not Ranked and increase the percentage of Green and Yellow foods received.

Work with your Procurement and Sourcing teams to identify strategies to increase the percentage of Green and Yellow food purchased by the food bank.

Available tools

- SWAP Inventory Reporting Example
- SWAP FAQs

Communication
Strategies for discussing nutrition goals with key stakeholders

Communicate with partner agencies about SWAP.

Share information about SWAP with your partner agencies to build an understanding of what the SWAP rankings mean in your online ordering system. Inform them about SWAP, why it is important, and how it works. From here you might work to identify agencies most ready to implement SWAP in their pantries.

Available tools

- Language to Communicate SWAP with Partner Program
- SWAP Info for Food Pantry Staff
- SWAP Posters and Shelf Tags
- Promotional video for food pantries

Communicate with food donors about SWAP and the food bank's nutritional goals.

Prepare reports showing the SWAP rankings for product donated by large food donors. Use these reports to help frame conversations with donors about the food bank's nutritional goals and how you can work together.

Available tools

- Donor Report Template
- SWAP FAQs

To access additional tools, ask questions, or share comments, reach out to the Institute for Hunger Research & Solutions at swap@foodshare.org.

Healthy Eating Research

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