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Food for Change Progress Report

Executive Summary

The Food for Change team seeks to address the root causes and downstream effects of food insecurity. To that end, the Food for Change team began a set of pilot partnerships in 2015. This report outlines the strategies being implemented and current progress.

The Food Scholarship project is an opportunity to develop strategic partnerships with previously unexplored sectors: education, financial capability, health and wellness, housing, and workforce development. Our goal is to support students as they pursue programming designed to foster self-sufficiency. Food Scholarship participants receive 60 pounds of food, including produce and meat, every two weeks to reduce the financial burden of purchasing groceries.

Since the inaugural Food Scholarship pilot with Alliance for Multicultural Community Services, the Food Bank has engaged with thirty-one programs to pilot the Food Scholarship and Food Prescription programs. Of these, nineteen projects are currently running and three are expected to begin Fall of 2017. To date, more than 600 participants have been enrolled in the Food Scholarship program. Currently, approximately 200 participants have been enrolled in the Food Prescription program.

As we have developed the Food Scholarship and Food Prescription program, thirteen Scholarship Pantries have been set-up to facilitate food distribution for Food Scholarship and Food Prescription clients.



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History

Houston Food Bank's service area consists of 18 counties in southeast Texas. According to Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap study, southeast Texas faces a food insecurity rate of 17.8%. At present, Harris County, the most populous county HFB serves, has 753,640 individuals who are food insecure, making it the fourth highest in the country. To address this need, HFB partners with over 600 hunger-relief organizations to allocate food to clients. Last fiscal year, the Food Bank distributed 79 million nutritious meals to clients and served approximately 800,000 individuals. Among food insecure households with children, two thirds contain at least one employed individual. Yet, these households still find it difficult to become food secure because of competing needs like housing, medical expenses, and other bills.

In fall of 2012, HFB formed the Food for Change (FFC) committee to assess its hunger relief efforts in order to discover gaps in the service area and identify ways for the organization to meet the third goal of its strategic plan, which is to use food as a catalyst to social service provision. The FFC committee worked with staff to analyze historical data on food distributions at the county and agency level, survey partner agencies to find out what additional social services they provided, and conduct focus groups with community stakeholders, partner agencies, and clients. From this, it was discovered that although the need in the service area rises continuously each year, the majority of the agencies did not have the capacity to expand their services to clients and that food alone would not resolve the problem of food-insecurity in the service area. Instead families would continue to need the emergency food system until the conditions that led to food insecurity were addressed. To this effort, HFB leadership determined that while HFB would remain committed to providing massive amounts of food to hunger relief charities, the Food Bank's strategy must evolve to address the root causes of food insecurity.

HFB strongly believes that food banks have the potential to play a major role in eliminating the root causes of food insecurity through strategic partnerships with organizations that focus on related issues. As already noted, this philosophy is reflected in the Food Bank's third strategic goal, which is to use food as a catalyst for additional social services. As HFB's vision for the future of food banking, FFC strategically distributes food as a catalyst to motivate client participation in partner social service programs with measurable outcomes. Through FFC, the Food Bank seeks to transform



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lives and reduce the number of families who need food assistance. The FFC program will transition efforts from feeding the people in line to shortening the line.

Food for Change leverages the nutritious and monetary value of the Food Bank's resources by partnering with programs that have a high impact in changing the lives of families in areas that are closely related to food insecurity. To ultimately reduce the need the Food Bank will work with organizations in the education, employment, health, housing, and financial capability sectors. These organizations can integrate food into evidence-based programs that measure client outcomes and can be expanded or replicated.

Food Scholarship Program

Food scholarships are a central feature of FFC. Clients receive food scholarships when they commit to completion of programs that can lead them to self-sufficiency. Fresh produce, dairy, meat, and shelf-stable items will be targeted to low-income populations so that the Food Bank can support a family's move out of the emergency food system. Food scholarships reduce financial pressure by covering a portion of household grocery costs so clients can focus on improving their lives. We are targeting the following sectors: housing, financial capability, workforce development, education (higher education and adult basic education), and health and wellness.

Food scholarship recipients will receive a Scholarship Card that can be redeemed for groceries twice a month at designated scholarship food pantries strategically located near clients throughout the greater Houston area. As with traditional scholarships, recipients of food scholarships must maintain eligibility through their participation in selected programs.



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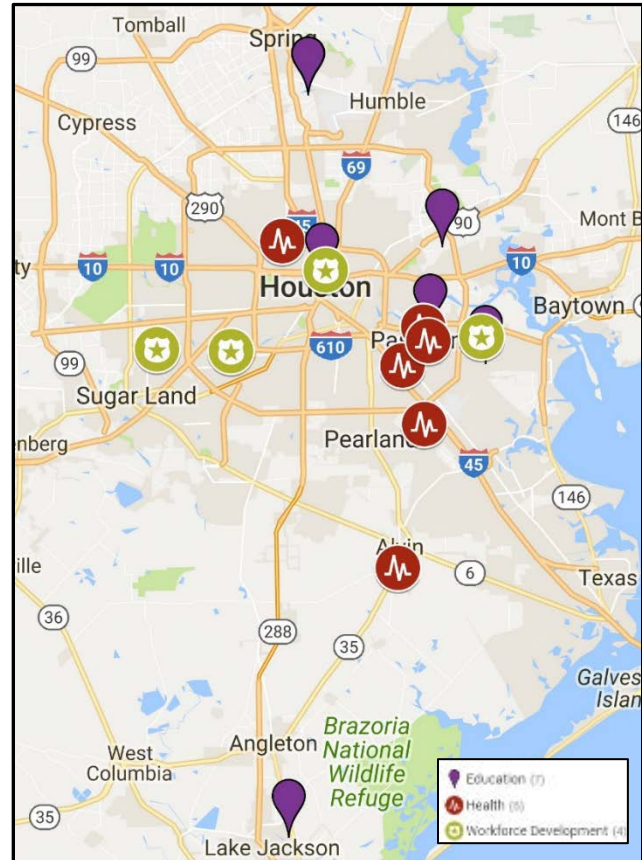
A list of current Food Scholarship programs:

Education

San Jacinto College North/Central Applied Technology and Health Occupations RCT Study; 02/2017—present

Houston Food Bank (HFB) and Rice have partnered to evaluate the efficacy of utilizing a food scholarship as an incentive and support tool within San Jacinto Community College. As a part of the study, HFB and our San Jacinto partners recruit students in Applied Technology and Health Occupations program to participate in the Food Scholarship program.

Students are offered the opportunity to opt into the Food Scholarship lottery and have a 50% chance of receiving the food scholarship. Students consent to the lottery and are then offered the opportunity to participate in the study conducted by Rice.



The pilot started Spring 2016 with only 40 enrolled students; the Food Scholarship has now expanded and presently has 363 students enrolled in the Food Scholarship program.

Students have expressed how much the program has impacted their overall studies, families and, their academic career:

"This is wonderful and I finally can eat more than twice a day now. Thank thank thank thank thank you so much. I shall continue putting hard work in school and finish successfully. Thanks once again!"

"This will be a very big help for my family. We are very grateful for this. Thank you!!"



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Of the 19 days that the market was open, only 10% of San Jacinto Food Scholarship recipients did not visit the market; those that did visit the market visited the market 3.7 times.

Brazosport College

Accelerate Texas; 01/2017—present

Accelerate Texas programs are designed to integrate or contextualize basic reading, math, and writing skills with entry level workforce training programs. Accelerate Texas programs consist of a coherent series of connected in demand workforce training programs, known as stackable credentials, which allow adults to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment. To date, nine Accelerate Texas students have enrolled in the Food Scholarship program.

Jumpstart; 01/2017—present

Jumpstart is a nine-week training program. Upon completion, participants will receive nine college credit hours, a Marketable Skills Award from Brazosport College, National Readiness Certificate, and a NCCER Blue Card-Core. Students will specialize in millwright/machining, electrical or pipefitting work. The Food Scholarship will allow students to focus on academic success and increase completion rates. To date, 14 Jumpstart students have enrolled in the Food Scholarship program.

Communities in Schools

Lone Star College North Harris; 02-2016—present

The Communities in Schools network is a federation of independent 501 organizations in 27 states and the District of Columbia that work to address the dropout epidemic. Communities in Schools (CIS) in Houston is a campus-based, non-profit organization providing direct services and resources to under-served children with unmet needs.

At the Lone Star College-North Harris campus, CIS case managers identified "vulnerable" students, based upon academic, personal, and social service needs. Students must be enrolled in at least 6 credit hours and commit to meeting with their CIS counselor twice a month to be eligible for the food scholarship. Students selected for the Food Scholarship program will receive access to a client choice food distribution twice a month and can expect to receive at least 120 pounds of food per month--half of that produce. We provide Food Scholarships to about 40 students who applied for and were accepted into the FS program.



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The food scholarship in the last six months has been a reliable source of groceries for students. According to a student the food scholarship has, "literally kept [him] in school and improved the health of [his] family. The financial strain of multiple medical expenses meant that [he] would have likely dropped out of school (and thus lost [his] student job as well) but instead this program took away the constant fear of how [he] would provide for [his] family.

Harris County Department of Education

Harris County Department of Education provides education services to the general public and 26 school districts throughout Harris County and beyond.

English as a Second Language; 10/2016—present

Students enrolled in the ESL program are eligible to receive the Food Scholarship if they maintain 100% participation in the program. This will provide incentive to students to make-up classes. As language classes require intensive study and a significant time commitment, the food scholarship will reduce financial burden and allow the student to focus on their study. To date, 78 ESL students have been enrolled in the Food Scholarship program.

Harris Country Department of Education GED; 1/2017—present

To date, 13 GED students have been enrolled in the Food Scholarship program.

Workforce Development

BakerRipley

ASPIRE Program; 10/2016—present

ASPIRE is a new workforce initiative aimed at connecting hardworking people to better jobs and living wages. The action plan for ASPIRE is to partner with employers in Houston's growing industries to identify middle-skill job opportunities, and connect with committed workers who are ready to acquire the skills needed to obtain these jobs. To date, 57 ASPIRE students have been enrolled in the Food Scholarship program.

Goodwill

Job Connection Services; 10/2017—present

Clients create goals/employment plan with case worker (includes connection to needed resources and trainings). Clients are assessed and enrolled into training programs that promise opportunities for living wage employment. Currently, individuals enrolled in the Retail Management program are offered the Food Scholarship program. To date, 16 Goodwill Retail Management participants have been enrolled in the Food Scholarship program.



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Wesley Community Center

Bridges to Career Opportunities; 1/2017—present

Wesley Community Center is a non-profit organization located in the Near Northside neighborhood, serving struggling families in Houston for over 100 years. In 2013, LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation of Greater Houston,) began piloting the *Bridges to Career Opportunities*, initiative. *Bridges* builds upon the model of supporting the financial stability of clients through bundled coaching services (access to public benefits, financial and employment coaching) and expands the support to also integrate targeted training. Clients continue to receive coaching while also ramping up their educational skills, accessing technical training and pursuing certification in a chosen industry. The focus and goal of the program is to connect community residents to jobs that have growth along a career pathway, while also building a strong workforce for employers. To date, 31 Bridge participants from the CNA, CDA, and PHL/EKG programs have been enrolled in the Food Scholarship program.

Workforce Solutions

Workforce Development Program; 10/2017—present

We are currently partnered with the Workforce Solutions' Workforce Development program. The Workforce Development program provides training and education scholarship support for programs within their Training Provider Network. This includes courses of study leading to associate or bachelor degrees. Career advancement training consists of courses and seminars to help customers gain additional skills within their occupation. To date, 27 Workforce Development participants have been enrolled in the Food Scholarship program.

Health and Wellness

Greater Houston YMCA

Diabetes Prevention Program; 2/2016—present

A trained lifestyle coach facilitates a small group of pre-diabetic patients, referred from Federally Qualified Health Centers and other community centers, to discuss behavior changes that can improve the health of programs and prevent the onset of diabetes. The program consists of 25 one-hour sessions delivered over the course of a year. The program aims to help participants lose 5-7% of their body weight and gradually increase physical activity to 150 minutes per week. To date, 41 YMCA DPP participants have been enrolled in the Food Scholarship program.



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Scholarship Pantry Network

Food scholarship recipients can redeem their Food Scholarship at a Scholarship Pantry. This site must be client choice, that is, provide the Scholarship recipient with the ability to choose their own groceries versus being provided with a pre-selected set of food product. We seek to establish sites that are within a 5-10 mile radius of the Scholarship Program to ensure convenience for recipients. These sites must also agree to shopping hours that include weekends and evening hours.

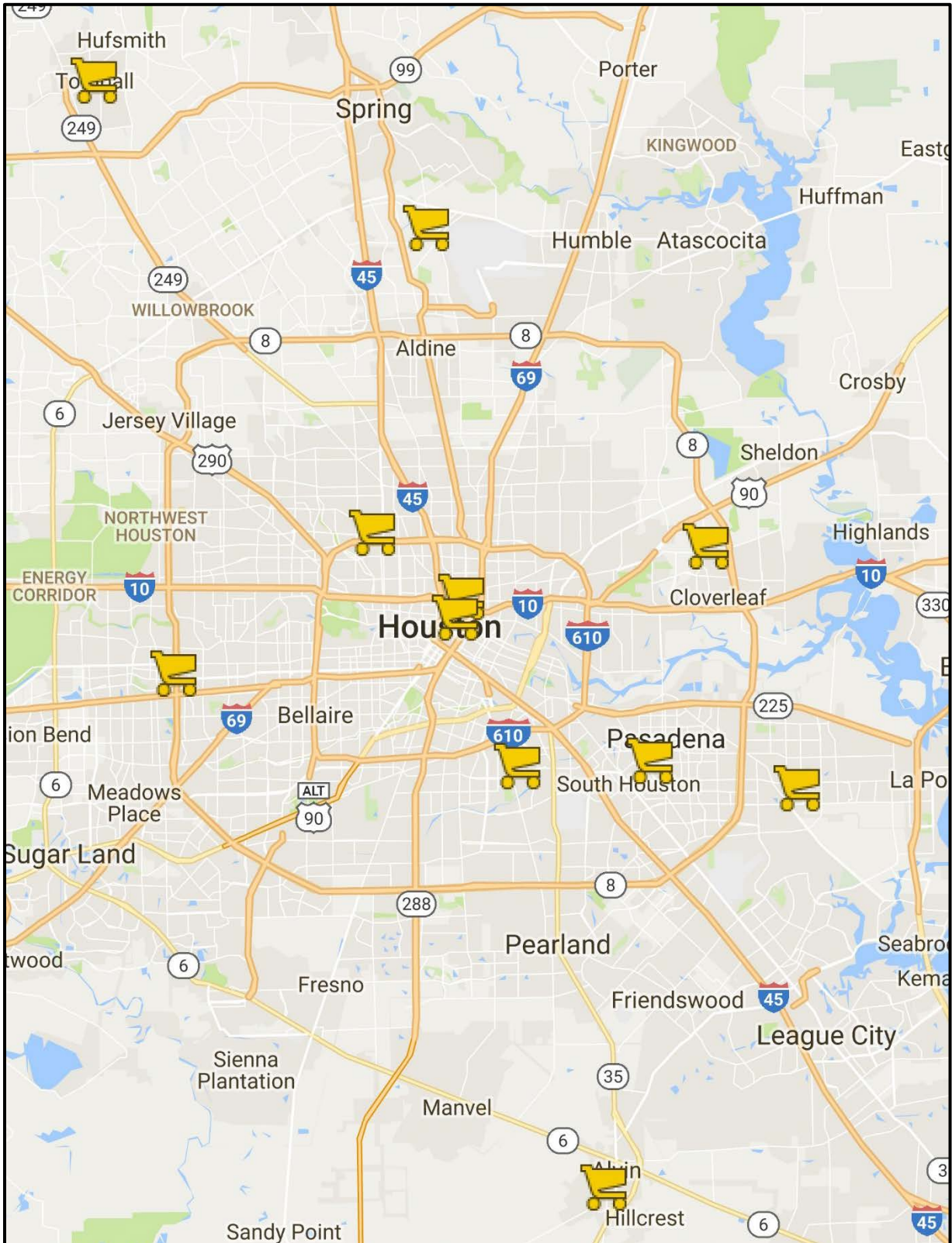
Clients have access to the following:

- Shelf stable items
 - Protein (canned chicken, canned tuna, peanut butter, beans)
 - Canned produce
 - Grains—brown rice, whole grain spaghetti, whole grain bread
 - Miscellaneous (spaghetti sauce, crackers, etc.)
- Non-perishable items
 - Frozen meat (chicken breast, breaded chicken nuggets, ground turkey, etc.)
 - Fresh produce (at least 4 types of fruits and 4 types of vegetables)

Scholarship Market	Pounds of Food Distributed
Alvin	20,465
Alliance for Multicultural Community Services	26,698
BakerRipley Harbach-Ripley	14,439
Bethel's Heavenly Hands	7,784
Brazosport Cares	9,321
Harris Health Northwest	9,824
Lone Star College North Harris	106,154
Pasadena Community Ministry	128,599
San Jacinto College Central	52,078
San Jacinto College North	26,964
Wesley Community Pantry	11,383
West Houston Assistance Ministries	14,844
Total	428,553

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Food Prescription Program

We began the Food Prescription pilot through the BUILD Health Challenge grant. This program aims to tackle the downstream health effects of food insecurity by improving access to healthy food for food insecure patients of four Pasadena clinics. Food Prescription participants are referred by the four Pasadena clinics if they screen positive for food insecurity and live within the BUILD zip code area (77502, 77503, 77506) designated by the pilot program. If the patients enroll in the program they are provided with 30 pounds of produce, three healthy non-perishable items, and a package of lean frozen meat every other week for 12 total distributions at Pasadena Community Ministries.

There are four clinics involved in the Food Prescription Program: Pasadena Health Center, Memorial Hermann Kruse School Based Clinic, Memorial Hermann Wave School Based Clinic, and Memorial Herman Southeast Health Center. Thus far, 224 food prescriptions have been written. At least 153 patients have redeemed their food prescription at least once.

Key Accomplishments

- Created a network of clinics that implement FI screenings and refer patients
- Created a Food Prescription market at Pasadena Community Ministries
- Created a data reporting system for both the clinics and the pantry to track referrals and utilization
- Gathered Pilot data on referrals, utilization, and program problems to inform future version of the Food Prescription Program

Key Findings/Learnings

- Ordering for the FoodRx Pantry comes with many challenges like delivery complications, bad produce, difficulty sourcing enough produce and healthy dry goods from the warehouse, and trying to order enough but not too much food for distributions with irregular attendance.
- Some clinics have a much greater ability to prescribe Food Prescriptions than others.
- Expanding the area of service for the program would allow some clinics to enroll significantly more patients in the program.
- Regular Phone banking should be a part of future programs to identify client barriers to access and to encourage participation.



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- The services offered to patients by the Food Prescription Program could be of great value to participating clinics, especially if we can demonstrate that the program leads to improved health outcomes.

Food Prescription 2.0

As the BUILD Health Challenge grant winds down, we are looking for opportunities to expand the Food Prescription program beyond its original geographic scope and mission. We are interested in conducting a research study that will examine the health outcomes of increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables for patients screened for food insecurity. We will leverage existing and developing relationships with health care systems (Federally Qualified Health Centers, Texas Medical Center, etc.).

FFC Collaborations

BUILD Health Challenge

Improving Health Through a Sustainable Food System, a Pasadena initiative of Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services, the Houston Food Bank and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, was awarded a \$250,000 grant from the [BUILD Health Challenge](#), a national awards program, for its efforts to improve community health. The initiative, one of seven implementation grants funded nationally, emerged from partners' work on Healthy Living Matters (HLM), a Harris County collaborative to curb childhood obesity.

The central goal of north Pasadena's *Sustainable Food System* initiative is to develop a community-supported food system in order to eliminate conditions that lead to limited or uncertain access to adequate food, known as food insecurity.

The BUILD Health Challenge grant will allow north Pasadena's *Sustainable Food System* to accelerate its efforts toward nutrition equity through:

- Production: establishing a sustainable public source of accessible healthy food in north Pasadena
- Distribution: developing an expanded local network of innovative food suppliers and distributors
- Consumption: coordinating local programs and policies like Food Scholarships and the Food Prescription ("FoodRx") to help community members access food and make healthy choices



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Healthcare Workgroup

FFC has taken an active role in representing the Houston Food Bank at the Healthcare Working Group convened by General Electric (GE) and the Clinton Health Matters Initiative (CHMI). Out of this working group, a consensus project was formed called the Food Insecurity Initiative. The goal of this project is to build a collective membership of Houston/Harris County provider organizations which can identify the magnitude of food insecurity in the community, prioritize the areas for immediate intervention, coordinate treatment/solution at point of care for patients, and full roll-out after 18 months of testing. The coalition of support involves the following mix of organizations:

Providers: Memorial Hermann, CHI St. Luke's, Methodist, Texas Children's hospital, Harris Health system, Legacy, Hope Clinic, FQHC's.

Community Organizations: GHHC, TMC, Mental Health America, Houston Food Bank.

ACE Coalition Food Insecurity Workgroup

FFC has taken an active role in the ACE Coalition Food Insecurity Workgroup hosted by Texas Children's Hospital. The workgroup meets monthly and is focused on food insecurity screening and working on the creation of a standard of care. Thus, the work parallels, but is more implementation focused than the Healthcare Working Group.

FFC Research Partners

Though Food for Change, the Houston Food Bank seeks to transform lives and reduce the number of families who need food assistance. We will measure success by tracking specific outcomes from each program to see if food scholarship help people achieve their goals. To that end FFC has developed partnerships that will allow for a rigorous evaluation of the efficacy of our partnerships and the impact of our investment.

Children at Risk

Houston Food Bank has partnered with Children at Risk to study Food for Change partnerships. Children at Risk is a research, public policy analysis, and advocacy non-profit. Specifically, Children at Risk seeks to understand which Food for Change programs (Food Scholarships, Food Prescription, etc.) have the greatest impact. In addition, they will provide feedback on how continued improvements can be made to the program. They will do this in the following ways:



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- Establish data sharing agreements and partnerships with food scholarship partners
- Establish an evaluation structure to understand the impact of food scholarship on each partner organization
- Compare impact between food scholarship partners
- Conduct a process evaluation of implementation of food scholarship programs

Children at Risk will not only evaluate Food for Change partnerships, but also serve as a thought partner in defining the trajectory of departmental strategy.

Rice University

We have partnered with Dr. Kenneth Wolpin and Dr. Flavio Cunha to conduct a Randomized Control Trial study of the Food Scholarship with San Jacinto College and University of Houston-Downtown.

UT School of Public Health & M.D. Anderson

We have partnered with UT School of Public Health and M.D. Anderson to evaluate interventions for the BUILD Health Challenge, including the Food Scholarship and Food Prescription program in north Pasadena.

Research Roundtable Discussion

At the end of March 2017, Houston Food Bank and Children at Risk will host roundtable conversation about efforts to evaluate the impact of Food for Change on the greater Houston community. We would like the input of academics in assessing evaluation methodologies and better understanding how to bring additional researchers into the Food for Change partnership.

Other Accomplishments/Innovations

Food Scholarship Request for Proposal

In October 2015 the FFC team developed the Request for Proposal to select competitive Food Scholarship partners that would meet the following criteria:

- Have measurable outcomes
- Integrate the Food Scholarship into their program as opposed to offering it as an emergency resource
- Have opportunity for scale



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The Request for Proposal is an industry standard for the competitive allocation of resources. In the case of Food for Change, it has allowed us to be strategic and select partners who have devised innovative methods for integrating the Food Scholarship to support their outcomes. Moreover, we have been able to streamline our processes, decrease the amount of time it takes to on-board a new partner, and improve the customer service we are able to offer both Food Scholarship program partners and Scholarship participants. We accept Food Scholarship Project proposals on a quarterly basis. To date, we have had five RFP cycles and received over 20 proposals.

We continue to refine the RFP process. Recent improvements have included the development of an RFP rubric; an RFP Technical Assistance Webinar; and an RFP Review Committee consisting of FFC, Children at Risk, and internal HFB stakeholders.

Food Insecurity Training Program for Healthcare Professionals

The Food Insecurity Training Program was designed to educate health professionals and community members on: the issue of food insecurity; its prevalence on the national, state, and local levels; clinical implications of food insecurity; how patients can be screened for food insecurity; and, the resources available at the Houston Food Bank and its partner agency network. Since trainings began being implemented, some 631 individuals have received the training. 290 of these individuals were health professionals and 341 of these individuals were non-health professionals.

Currently, the program and materials are being revamped to cater more specifically to health professionals and ensure collaborative partnerships can be formed with those receiving the Food Insecurity Trainings. As a part of this process, a pilot is being formed to close in the gap between food insecurity screenings by health systems and referrals to the Houston Food Bank network.

HFB Nutrition Policy

Food for Change has been a guiding force behind the development, adoption, and implementation of the Houston Food Bank Nutrition Policy. To better serve our clients in need, we have a responsibility to provide nutritious meals that will allow our communities to achieve healthy eating patterns and to live productive and active lives. The HFB Nutrition Policy explains how, as an organization, we strive to address this growing demand and meet the nutritional needs of the more than 800,000 clients we serve. We understand the role we play as an organization when it comes to



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providing nutritious foods, and will utilize the policy as a means to guide our focus towards procuring and distributing healthy items. The policy guidelines reflect the current and future direction of our food banking practices to better serve the HFB community and to promote the well-being of our client population.

The policy was created by the Nutrition Policy Working Group (NPWG), a multi-faceted group including members from HFB, partner agencies, Feeding Texas, and community partners. The policy was further revised HFB's Directors Team; the Food for Change, Outreach Services, and Operations departments; and, HFB's Executive Team. Upon approval of the Executive Team on November 14, 2016, the effective date of the policy was set as January 1, 2017.

Currently, HFB is in the implementation phase led by the Nutrition Policy Implementation Committee (NPIC), which is responsible for fully integrating this policy into each affected department's policies and procedures within six months of the effective date. Furthermore, NPIC is ensuring this policy is disseminated and communicated to all stakeholders within six months of the effective date as well as determining the means of measurement for the policy. After the implementation phase is complete, the Nutrition Policy Review Committee (NPRC) will be responsible for reviewing, updating, and evaluating this policy as needed.