

Project Summary

Enhancing Foodbank's Stakeholder Engagement Project

KEY POINTS

- Understanding stakeholder requirements and expectations is instrumental in enhancing their engagement,
- Meaningfully segmenting food insecure Australians facilitates development of targeted interventions and thereby reach-out to more Australians in need,
- Co-creating corporate volunteering programs would enhance engagement of corporates and volunteers,
- Corporate volunteers can not only bring more labour, but also donations (monetary and/or material), raise awareness of the food insecurity and food waste issues, and long-term value and impact to all parties involved.

THE CHALLENGE

Food insecurity is a growing concern in Australia. 3.7 million households have experienced food insecurity during the 12-month period leading to July 2023. Yet, 7.6 million tons of food is wasted annually and 70 percent of which is perfectly edible. Food rescue organisations like Foodbank Australia, collect and redistributes food that would otherwise go wasted. In 2023 alone, Foodbank has sourced food equivalent to 82 million meals. Yet, such effort currently satisfies only 60% of those needing food relief. This unmet demand is not due to a shortage of food, but capacity limitations of food rescue organisations.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Enhancing stakeholder engagement is a proven strategy for improving organisational capacity. This project focused on two stakeholder groups with great potential to enhance their engagement with Foodbank:

(a) food recipients - despite the rise in food insecurity, the proportion of those seeking food relief has gone down, and

(b) corporate volunteers – whose demand for volunteering is higher than the volunteering positions Foodbank's State operations can provide.

OUR RESEARCH

This project involved two studies. Study One, focusing on food recipients, carried out annual surveys to understand the nature of food insecurity in Australia, characteristics of food insecure Australians. Follow-up phone interviews were carried out with food insecure Australians to capture their lived experiences. These data contributed to the preparation of annual Hunger Reports (from 2020 to 2023). Given the limitation in focusing only on percentage values to draw accurate interpretations, we carried out complex statistical analysis on data spanning from 2017 to 2022 to identify meaningful segments of food insecure Australians. Study Two, aimed at understanding stakeholder expectations, utilised a qualitative exploratory method to gather data from volunteer managers, coordinators of participating corporates, corporate volunteers, and various secondary sources across Foodbank's State operations.

OUTCOMES

- Providing an easily understandable, yet detailed understanding of food insecurity and food insecure Australians, published four annual Hunger Reports (2020 – 2023),
- Integrating barriers for seeking food relief with socio-economic characteristics, meaningful segments of food insecure Australians were identified and targeted interventions were proposed (see Table 1 for interventions for five segments identified for 2022), and
- Providing a deeper understanding of expectation gaps between volunteer managers, participation corporates,

and corporate volunteers, multiple strategic and operational action for enhancing engagement are recommended.

Clusters	Interventions
Trusted friends	Partnering with Universities, TAFEs, and colleges
Young and employed	Social media campaigns to raise awareness Click and collect type after-hours service
Embarrassed boomers	Campaigns to reduce stigma associated with seeking relief Partnering with local community organisations
Unaware	Partnering with local community organisations Expanding mobile food relief services
Not satisfied	Enhance knowledge on food preparation Better understanding of food recipients' needs

Table 1. Targeted Interventions

IMPACT

If outcomes of this project contribute to 0.1 percent increase in Foodbank's capacity, that would result in,

- 82,000 more meals annually to Australians in need,
- rescuing over 20,000kg of food annually,
- estimated annual social return on investment of around \$500,000, and
- progress toward UN Sustainable Development Goals (2 – World free of hunger and 12.3 – Halving per capita food waste).

NEXT STEPS

Immediate next step is to carry out the Hunger survey 2024 and publish Hunger Report 2024, the process of which is funded by this project. The project team is available and willingly to work closely with Foodbank's State operations to support implementation of following recommendations and measure their success.

- Use of recognised and consistent measurement scales in the annual Hunger survey to improve the validity, reliability, and comparability of data.

- Supplement percentage data with advanced statistical analysis to draw meaningful and accurate interpretations.
- Develop targeted interventions to reach out to food insecure Australians who are currently not seeking assistance.
- Co-create corporate volunteering programs with selected corporate partners to provide more volunteering opportunities for corporates and enhance their engagement with Foodbank.
- Appoint a dedicated corporate volunteer coordinator in each Foodbank state operation.
- Implement a nationally consistent booking system to ease administrative tasks and enhance communication between Foodbank State operations and corporates.

PROJECT TEAM

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- David Pearson - End Food Waste CRC , CQUniversity, Australia

PROJECT REPORTS/PUBLICATIONS

Published

- Amarakoon, U, Brownlow, L, Bird, S, & Liang, X, 2021, *Consequences of food insecurity on Australians*, Poster, Fight Food Waste Corporative Research Centre, Adelaide.
- Amarakoon, U, Brownlow, L, Bird, S, & Liang, X, 2021, *Food insecurity amongst indigenous Australians*, Poster, Fight Food Waste Corporative Research Centre, Adelaide.
- Amarakoon, U, Brownlow, L, Bird, S, & Liang, X, 2021, *Food insecurity amongst migrant Australians*, Poster, Fight Food Waste Corporative Research Centre, Adelaide.

Coskun, A & Amarakoon, U 2022, 'Who goes hungry in Australia: Profiling food insecure individuals during COVID-19', *Proceedings of the Australia & New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference*, Perth Australia, pp. 609 – 612.

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Foodbank 2020, *Hunger Report 2020*. Foodbank Australia, North Ryde.

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Submitted and under review

Kamalmaz, K, Amarakoon, U, Bird, S & Liang, X, 2023, 'Stakeholder engagement in non-profits: Review and way forward', *Nonprofit Management and Leadership Journal*.

Kamalmaz, K, Amarakoon, U, Bird, S & Liang, X, 2023, 'The process of people? Overcoming the challenges of food waste and insecurity in Australia', *Nonprofit Management and Leadership Journal*

PROJECT WEBPAGE

<https://endfoodwaste.com.au/projects/enhancing-foodbanks-stakeholder-engagement/>