Improving individual and household food security outcomes in South Australia

Discussion paper

October 2017
**Contents**

**Executive Summary**

**Introduction to the Food Security Project**

- Project objectives
- Project outline
- Why a discussion paper?

**Introduction to food security**

- What is food security?
- Determinants
- Impacts
- Australian policy context
- Food security in South Australia

**Future directions: How can we work together to improve outcomes in South Australia’s charitable food system?**

- Creating a collaborative and integrated system with a shared vision
- Addressing the determinants of food security
- Building skills and capacity to facilitate independence
- Improving health and nutrition outcomes

**Next steps**

**Appendix 1: Engagement summary**

- Food security literature review
- Food relief provider survey
- Food security roundtable

**References**
Executive Summary

Charitable food relief is increasingly part of South Australia’s welfare response. An invaluable service for those in need, food relief also offers a connection point for charitable organisations to refer clients to other services. It contributes to the reduction of food waste by rescuing food that would otherwise end up in landfill. It focuses the efforts of a vast number of volunteers across the State.

Over the last 10 years, the sector has rapidly grown with new organisations appearing yearly, both collecting and distributing increasing amounts of food. The State’s largest charitable food relief provider, Foodbank, rescued over 1.3 million kilograms of food from landfill in 2015, distributing enough food for over 4.3 million meals.

There is however limited empirical research about how charitable food relief assists people to move out of food insecurity. There is also limited research into how – or if – the charitable food sector supports positive health outcomes for its clients. Food security is a key determinant of health, with food insecurity linked to chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. As such, the provision of charitable food relief represents a valuable – and potentially unrealised – opportunity to improve health outcomes amongst vulnerable populations.

In light of this, the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) is working with the Department of Health and Ageing (DHA), through a Public Health Partner Authority agreement, to integrate efforts to address the social determinants of disadvantage and thereby contribute to the prevention of chronic disease and the promotion of health and wellbeing in South Australian communities. Food relief presents a focus for these efforts.

Noting the lack of empirical research, in 2016 DCSI and DHA commissioned researchers to undertake a literature review to better understand South Australia’s current and future food security needs. Research identified that current responses to food insecurity tend to address immediate hunger, with insufficient consideration given to assisting people to move out of food insecurity. Research also showed that on average, people are in receipt of charitable food relief for 7 years, indicating that:

- food insecurity is a chronic problem for many and not simply an acute crisis of hunger that is resolved with a food parcel; and
- further consideration is needed to determine how the charitable food system can better support clients to move beyond food relief.

Additionally, it was found that significant scope exists to consider the nutritional value of food being distributed through charitable food relief. The report highlights initiatives that represent good practice (e.g. encouraging consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables), but notes that in the current arrangement, much of the food on offer through food relief is processed food, high in salt, fat and sugar.

In response to these findings, DCSI and DHA are now engaging with the charitable food relief sector, the community services sector, and clients of food relief to build a shared vision for a charitable food system that optimally addresses food insecurity in South Australia.

This discussion paper forms one aspect of the engagement process. Crucially, it invites all interested parties to consider and respond to a range of questions that will help to build that shared vision.
Introduction to the Food Security Project

Project objectives

In partnership with stakeholders, this project aims to:

- better understand the breadth and reach of charitable food relief in South Australia;
- gather broad input into the functions and roles required within a charitable food system that:
  - is collaborative and integrated;
  - supports people experiencing food insecurity to improve health;
  - builds skills and capacity to address the root cause of food insecurity and facilitate independence from the system; and
  - continues to realise the environmental benefits of diverting surplus food from landfill;
- create a shared vision for an optimal charitable food system in South Australia;
- better inform funding decisions to support sustainable outcomes to assist vulnerable and disadvantaged South Australians exit food insecurity.

Project outline

The project includes a number of different components to incorporate engagement with a wide range of stakeholders:
Why a discussion paper?

This discussion paper describes a proposal to build a shared vision for an optimal charitable food system to address food security in South Australia. This work will be based on research findings and engagement with a range of stakeholders, including the charitable food relief sector, the community services sector, and clients of charitable food relief.

The purpose of the discussion paper is to:

- provide background information about the determinants and impacts of food insecurity;
- present the current state of South Australia's charitable food system, as informed by:
  - the food security literature review;
  - the first key stakeholder roundtable; and
  - the food relief provider survey;
- promote opportunities for innovation by presenting evidence of best practice in charitable food relief from around the globe; and
- seek input from the full range of stakeholders on the key discussion questions (see pages 10-15), with the ultimate aim of achieving the project objectives.

All interested parties are invited to make a written submission to any or all of the questions raised through this paper.

Submissions can be sent to DCSI.AffordableLivingPrograms@sa.gov.au by 7 November 2017. Submissions will be treated as non-confidential, unless otherwise indicated.

Responses will be consolidated and presented in a final report, which will be available on the DCSI website by early 2018. Respondents will also be notified individually when the report is available.
Introduction to food security

What is food security?

Individual and household food security is defined as the ability to acquire safe, appropriate and nutritious food on a regular basis, and using socially acceptable means, to live an active and healthy life\(^1\).

People may experience temporary periods of food insecurity in response to crisis; however many people experience food insecurity as a chronic issue. In fact, a recent study of food relief clients in Western Australia found that over 80% of clients have used such services for over three years, with 50% for more than 10 years (1).

Determinants

Many factors trigger people to become food insecure, including domestic and family violence, sudden job loss and bill shock.

The factors that sustain food insecurity in the long-term are complex; however, in general, people living in poverty are at greater risk of food insecurity. Low income, housing affordability, chronic ill health, and high living costs are all determinants of both poverty and food insecurity.

Low-income households need to spend a greater proportion of their weekly budget on food than average income households. Likewise, rent and utilities make up a greater proportion of household spending and when resources are strained, people tend to prioritise rent and utilities over food.

Impacts

Social and economic disadvantage are determinants of both food insecurity and poor health, with significant differences in prevalence between those experiencing greatest disadvantage and least disadvantage. The ABS National Health Survey 2014-15 clearly reflected this, with those in the lowest SEIFA (Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas) quintile more than twice as likely to have three or more chronic diseases as those in the highest quintile (see Figure 2).

\[^1\] Food security on a global level is the inability for countries to access and provide sufficient food to meet collective needs, which is outside the scope of this work.
An exploration of the international literature regarding the health impacts of food insecurity for the Food Security and Health in Rural and Remote Australia report (2) confirmed this with strong evidence that those who are food insecure have greater incidences of many chronic diseases and risk factors for chronic diseases such as obesity. Specifically, several studies found people with type 2 diabetes, who were also food insecure and/or on low incomes, had poorer glycaemic control due to difficulty in following an appropriate diet, which led to an increased number of hypoglycaemic events (2).

Household food insecurity has been associated with depression and anxiety, particularly among caregivers, affecting not only the carers but also children in the household, resulting in behavioural issues and poor parent-child attachment (3). Additionally poor nutrition and hunger in children has been linked with impaired growth and poor cognitive development in early childhood, and issues with school attendance, poor behaviour and academic performance in primary school (4,5).

**Australian policy context**

While a number of policy and strategic initiatives to address food security in Australia have been conceived in the past decade none have been successfully implemented:

- The Council of Australian Government’s *National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities* (2009) was designed to provide a coordinated response to improving food security in remote Indigenous communities through five key recommended actions. However a 2014 audit of the strategy found that only one - the national Healthy-Eating Action Plan - was completed.

- In 2011, the Australian Government proposed a *National Nutrition Policy* to provide a framework for identifying, driving, and monitoring nutrition initiatives within the preventative health portfolio, including food security initiatives. However, despite undertaking a comprehensive scoping study in 2013 the Policy never came to fruition.

- The *National Food Plan* was launched in 2013 outlining the Australian Government’s strategy for the nation’s food industry. Originally intended to build a strategy for food security, sustainability, and affordability, it instead focused heavily on agricultural productivity and food export with minimal consideration for addressing food insecurity amongst disadvantaged populations. In any case, due to the 2013 change in government the Plan was not implemented.

In September 2015, Australia became a signatory to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the United Nations General Assembly’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG 1 seeks to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere” and SDG 2 seeks to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”. The first target under this goal (Target 2.1) seeks to “end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round” by 2030.

At a state level, the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) and the Department for Health and Ageing (DHA) established a Public Health Partnership in 2016, under the *South Australian Public Health Act 2011* with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of South Australian communities. A key objective of this partnership, which this project seeks to achieve, is to “support the non-government sector to address food security by assisting vulnerable populations to increase their knowledge, understanding and intake of healthy, nutritious food”.
Food security in South Australia

Most South Australians enjoy good health and quality of life however this is certainly not the case for all. Around 12% of South Australians live below the poverty line (6), with some population groups experiencing particularly high levels of disadvantage.

Individual and household food security in South Australia is measured by the South Australian Monitoring and Surveillance System (SAMSS), a monthly phone survey of approximately 600 South Australian adults and children. The survey includes a single question measure of food security: ‘in the last 12 months, were there any times you ran out of food and couldn’t afford to buy more?’ In 2015, the SAMSS provided an estimated overall prevalence of food insecurity of 4.2%.

The SAMSS data also presents a picture of who is more likely to be food insecure in South Australia, as shown in Figure 3.

![Figure 3: SA food insecurity demographics](image-url)

- **WOMEN**: Women: 4.9%, Men: 4.1%
- **UNEMPLOYED**: Unemployed: 12.3%, Employment full time: 2.2%
- **LOW INCOME**: Income < $20k: 12.5%, Income > $80k: 1.2%
- **PUBLIC HOUSING**: Public housing tenants: 14.5%, Home owners: 2.2%
- **ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER**: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: 16.0%, Other Australians: 4.4%
- **FAMILY BREAKDOWN**: Separated: 11.2%, Divorced: 10.6%, Married: 2.0%
Future directions: How can we work together to improve outcomes in South Australia’s charitable food system?

Charitable food systems are made up of multiple components, as represented in Figure 4.

To help gain a better understanding of South Australia’s own charitable food system, DCSI and DHA have undertaken a range of engagement activities to date, which are summarised on page 4 and detailed in Appendix 1.

Through one of these activities – a roundtable workshop with our key funded partners in August 2017 – four key focus areas emerged as areas to focus on to improve the State’s charitable food system:

- Creating a collaborative and integrated system with a shared vision
- Addressing the determinants of food security
- Building skills and capacity to facilitate independence
- Improving health and nutrition outcomes

The following section will explore each of these areas, along with key evidence from the literature on charitable food relief. Charitable food relief has been established in countries like the UK, Canada, and the US for many decades resulting in a wealth of information that South Australia can learn from.

Key discussion questions are included for each of these four areas and for further general discussion. We invite you to consider these questions – your responses will help inform a vision for an optimal charitable food system in South Australia.
Creating a collaborative and integrated system with a shared vision

At the roundtable, it was agreed that greater collaboration and integration are required within the charitable food system. Attendees identified that at present:

- numerous providers are operating in an independent and somewhat disjointed way;
- providers are unsure about what each other’s roles are, and because of this there is potential both for overlap and gaps in service delivery;
- the (met and unmet) need for charitable food relief is currently unclear, particularly in terms of geographical location; and
- progress towards tackling food insecurity cannot be measured as providers are not working towards any shared outcomes.

Work has already begun to address some of these issues, including the food relief provider survey which has helped us better understand the number of providers, their roles, the geographical reach of current services, and the met and unmet food security needs in South Australia (See Appendix 1). Additionally, an online network is currently being established and a series of future roundtable sessions are planned to facilitate ongoing collaboration between key stakeholders.

Collaboration and alignment of objectives are identified in the literature as being vital to successful charitable food systems (7). One study that examined 25 different food projects in the UK identified a range of factors that lead to successful and sustainable food projects, including:

- reconciling the different agendas of the organisations involved in the project;
- local community support and involvement;
- shared ownership; and
- networking and building partnerships (8).

Discussion questions

1.1 What would a successful collaborative and integrated charitable food system look like in SA?
Addressing the determinants of food security

Charitable food relief alone cannot address food insecurity as it does not address the root causes, such as unemployment and low income. This is widely acknowledged throughout the literature (9-13), and was echoed by roundtable attendees.

Even with the efforts of government and non-government, food insecurity will persist at least into the near future. Charitable food organisations across the world have begun to identify changes to their service models that might address the determinants of food security.

For example, some organisations have expanded their role to include advocacy and awareness-building activities (14,15), using their public platform to amplify their clients’ voices, build awareness around food security and advocate for systemic change.

However, the literature suggests that charitable food relief is best positioned to address the determinants of food security when effectively incorporated within a broader system of supports that aim to build skills and capacity (7,8).

Witnesses to Hunger

*Witnesses to Hunger* is a research and advocacy project based in the United States that involves working in partnership with mothers and caregivers of young children with lived experience of food insecurity. These participants use their stories and photographs to advocate for their own families and communities in order to achieve lasting change.
Building skills and capacity to facilitate independence

Roundtable attendees acknowledged that while charitable food relief is an important “band-aid solution” to supporting people in crisis, other wrap-around services are crucial to reducing long-term reliance and facilitating independence. Many attendees highlighted that food relief is an invaluable entry point for engagement and referral of people in need to other services such as financial counselling and homelessness and domestic violence services.

In line with these observations, internationally there has been a marked shift away from the standalone food bank model towards models that include other complementary services – sometimes referred to as “food bank plus” (7,15,20,21). Such models are typically integrated within the broader community, providing:

- access to free or heavily-subsidised food;
- opportunities for social connection; and
- a wider range of support services, sometimes co-located, to help build the skills and capacity to move to food security.

Models vary in different communities depending on community needs.

Canada’s Community Food Centres

**Community Food Centres (CFC)** are established in eight locations across Canada and provide access to nutritious food in a welcoming social setting, as well as programs in healthy food access, food skills, and engagement and education. Example programs include:

- Cooking and gardening classes to develop healthy food skills and behaviours;
- A community advocacy office where clients can access information, referrals and advice; and,
- A civic engagement program to give clients a voice on issues of food insecurity and poverty.

In a 2016 review, 76% of CFC participants reported making new friends at their local CFC, 95% felt that they belonged to a community, and 61% reported that CFC programs contributed positively to their mental health.

Freshplace: A food pantry that builds self-sufficiency

**Freshplace** is a food pantry program in Connecticut, United States that aims to help clients (who stay with the program for 15-18 months) increase their self-sufficiency, food security and opportunities for education and employment through:

- Access to fresh, healthy food through a client-choice pantry;
- Access to cooking classes and nutrition education;
- Case management and monthly motivational interviewing sessions; and
- Targeted referrals to education, training and employment services.

The program was evaluated in a randomised controlled trial in 2013, and was found to significantly improve food security, self-sufficiency and fruit and vegetable consumption among participants compared to control group (17). The program also led to the development of the More than Food Framework, a resource centre to assist charitable food relief organisations in providing a more holistic service.
There are also a number of innovative community-based initiatives that aim to facilitate independence by increasing people’s capacity to source and grow food locally.

Community-based initiatives to improve local access to food

- Community gardens provide opportunities for people to grow their own food and to build connections with their neighbours. Community gardens throughout SA can be found via Share N Save, an online platform that helps connect people with local activities that enable them to share and swap goods. The platform also maps food swaps, where people can exchange fruit and vegetables, seeds and seedlings, and gardening tips.
- A similar platform, RipeNearMe, helps users connect with people in their local community who are advertising their excess fruit and vegetables for giveaway, swap, or sale.
- Urban agriculture is the practice of growing and distributing food within cities and towns, and is promoted as a method of improving food security in urban areas by giving people greater control and ownership of their food systems.

  Whilst growing food on your own property or in community gardens is supported by most local councils, many are going further by supporting residents to grow edible plants in their verges or nature strips. For example, the City of Baywater Council in Perth did away with all requirements for verge gardens (eg – permits, approvals) and developed a simple one-page Verge Greening Guidelines to support residents to grow what they like!

- Finally, there are a number of examples of South Australians coming together to share food, for giveaway or exchange, through informal networks such as the online Adelaide Community Food Network, Grow Free, and TRADE*LAIDE groups.

Discussion questions

2.1 What role might food relief programs play in supporting clients to move beyond a reliance on food relief?

2.2 What additional services or supports do clients need to become independent of charitable food relief? If these supports already exist, how can we improve access for clients?
Improving health and nutrition outcomes

Roundtable attendees indicated a desire to improve the nutritional quality of food provided through charitable food relief. It was acknowledged that low-income populations tend to experience more health problems on average and to eat more unhealthy food than the rest of the population. Attendees indicated the need to minimise the provision of unhealthy food and drinks and maximise the availability of high quality, healthy foods to improve client health outcomes – goals that are consistently endorsed throughout the literature (7,10,16).

SA’s food relief system is currently demonstrating very good practice around sourcing and making fresh fruit and vegetables available to food relief clients. This is thanks in part to Foodbank’s partnership with the SA Produce Markets:

**Foodbank SA’s partnership with the SA Produce Markets**

In 2012, Foodbank SA established a partnership with the SA Produce Market to secure a 1,000m² site at the Market’s Pooraka warehouse, allowing Foodbank to easily source donations from fresh produce wholesalers. This partnership benefits the Produce Market by cutting their food waste while ensuring Foodbank with a steady source of fresh fruit and vegetables to distribute free of charge to charitable agencies across its member network.

While there is consensus around the need to focus efforts on minimising donations of unhealthy food and drinks and maximising donations of healthy non-perishable and staple foods, roundtable attendees also identified the complexity of this undertaking. Donations from the food industry are a valuable resource for the food relief sector but also serve the important purpose of reducing food waste, a key priority for the food industry due to the cost of sending waste to landfill. Rejecting donations of nutritionally poor food undermines this goal: attendees expressed a keen desire to maintain their mutually-beneficial relationship with the industry to ensure donations of healthier foods continue.

There is also the important matter of client choice. The literature is clear on the need to ensure clients can make their own choices around food and this was echoed by roundtable attendees who agreed that everyone has a right to consume the occasional ‘sometimes foods’ (9,15,17).

One possible strategy discussed at the roundtable was the development of a set of nutrition guidelines, or a nutrition policy. Nutrition policies can include restrictions on accepting unhealthy food donations or requirements around procurement of healthy foods, and can help support organisational decision making, establish accountability, and set clear internal and external expectations. An example is Feeding America’s Foods to Encourage framework:

**Foods to Encourage: A nutrition policy for US food banks**

**Feeding America** – a not-for-profit organisation that coordinates a network of over 200 food banks across the United States – developed a nutrition policy framework to encourage the distribution of healthy foods through its member food banks. The framework, called **Foods to Encourage (F2E)**, encourages the distribution of foods that align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans: fruit and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy and lean proteins. 68% of the food currently distributed through the Feeding America network is classified as F2E, with a target of reaching 75% by 2025.

Feeding America have also identified a number of successful, evidence-based strategies to encourage people to make healthy choices. For example, one study found simply switching the container used to display cabbages from cardboard boxes to heavy-duty plastic crates increased the likelihood of clients purchasing cabbages by 42 percent.

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“Are we taking people’s waste or are we taking stuff we know is good for people?”
Roundtable attendees also discussed the need for charitable food relief to incorporate educational programs that build skills such as cooking low-cost, healthy meals and shopping for healthy food on a budget. The benefits of such programs are highlighted in the literature (18,19), such as in the example of South Australia’s own Community Foodies program:

**SA Community Foodies: A healthy eating education program**

The SA Community Foodies program is a peer education program that trains and supports community volunteers (Foodies) to deliver healthy eating education and support to disadvantaged adults and their children. Over 250 Foodies across SA run programs and activities to promote healthy eating in their local communities.

An evaluation of the program demonstrated that Community Foodies significantly improves healthy eating knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour for both participants and Foodies. Additionally, Foodies reported significant improvement in their confidence, personal development and empowerment (22).

Finally, attendees discussed the need for greater public education around the cost of healthy food. It is commonly believed that it costs more to eat healthier, however recent research has shown that a healthy diet can be up to 12-15% cheaper than current, unhealthy diets in Australia (23).

**Discussion questions**

3.1 How can we support better health and nutrition outcomes for people in receipt of charitable food relief?

3.2 Is there capacity to improve the nutritional quality of food donated to charitable food relief services? What are the barriers, and what support would be required to overcome them?

**General discussion questions**

4.1 What do you see as the major issue/s faced by the charitable food sector?

4.2 What is Government’s role in developing and maintaining SA’s charitable food system? How and by what basis should Government make funding decisions in this system?

4.3 Is there a role for the sector in advocating for the right to food security and building awareness around the determinants of food security? If so, what is it?

4.4 What might appropriate activity and/or outcome measures look like for:
   4.4.1 Building skills and capacity to facilitate independence?
   4.4.2 Improving health and nutrition outcomes?

4.5 Is there anything else you would like to comment on?
Next steps

Interested parties are invited to make a written submission to any or all of the questions raised throughout this paper, and summarised below. Submissions can be sent to DCSI.AffordableLivingPrograms@sa.gov.au by 7 November 2017. Submissions will be treated as non-confidential, unless otherwise indicated.

Responses will be consolidated and presented in a final report, which will be available on the DCSI website by early 2018. Respondents will be notified individually when the report is available.

Discussion questions

1. Creating a collaborative and integrated system with a shared vision
   1.1 What would a successful collaborative and integrated charitable food system look like in SA?

2. Building skills and capacity to facilitate independence
   2.1 What role might food relief programs play in supporting clients to move beyond a reliance on food relief?
   2.2 What additional services or supports do clients need to become independent of charitable food relief? If these supports already exist, how can we improve access for clients?

3. Improving health and nutrition outcomes
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      4.4.1 Building skills and capacity to facilitate independence?
      4.4.2 Improving health and nutrition outcomes?
   4.5 Is there anything else you would like to comment on?
Appendix 1: Engagement summary

Food security literature review

DCSI and DHA sought to conduct a literature review in 2016 to better understand South Australia’s current and future food security needs, our current responses, and the evidence of best practice in charitable food relief. The literature review was undertaken by Professor Sue Fyfe and Dr. Christina Pollard from Curtin University and assisted by Dr. Sue Booth from Flinders University, and can be found here.

Food relief provider survey

In September 2017, DCSI and DHA conducted a survey of all known providers of:

- food rescue, which involves the distribution of food that is donated or rescued from manufacturers, restaurants, farms, supermarkets, and other sources to charitable food relief agencies. This may also involve the operation of warehouses to store and prepare food; and,

- charitable food relief, which involves the provision of free or subsidised food to people and households experiencing food insecurity.

Overall, 83 organisations responded to the survey, of which 79 identified as charitable food relief providers, two as food rescue providers, and two as both. The different types of agencies providing food relief services are shown in Figure 5. Most common are charitable (39%) and religious (25%) organisations, followed by incorporated community groups (13%).

A map of food relief services in South Australia can be found here. This map shows the varying degrees of disadvantage across the State’s Public Health Areas to illustrate the areas of greatest need in terms of food insecurity. As can be seen, some areas with particularly high levels of disadvantage appear to be well serviced while others are clearly underserviced – particularly in regional and remote areas.

Food rescue

Some key statistics about the four food rescue services are provided below in Figure 6, followed by a more detailed description of each.
Foodbank SA

Foodbank SA is the largest charitable food relief agency in South Australia, distributing food to over 550 community organisations and 460 schools through its four distribution centres in Edwardstown, Mount Gambier, Whyalla and the Riverland.

Foodbank SA also operates affordable food stores, known as Food Hubs, in Elizabeth, Bowden, Edwardstown, Port Pirie, and Mount Gambier. The Hubs are designed to provide clients a dignified shopping experience, offering choice and value for money. Vouchers to the Food Hubs are obtained through an assessment of need undertaken by community services partner agencies.

While Foodbank SA predominantly provides non-perishable food staples, fresh fruit and vegetables are also sourced through the Adelaide Produce Markets (see page 14 for more information).

OzHarvest

OzHarvest is a not-for-profit organisation that rescues surplus food from a variety of commercial food outlets for redistribution to local charitable organisations. OzHarvest Adelaide currently rescues food from 280 donors, which it supplies to 125 different charities. The organisation currently operates with four refrigerated vehicles Monday to Friday, as well as weekend collections.
from the Adelaide Central Markets on Saturdays, and the Adelaide Showgrounds Farmers Markets on Sundays, which are volunteer facilitated initiatives.

OzHarvest also works to address food insecurity through educational programs, including the NEST Program which educates the community around healthy eating habits, good nutrition and the reduction of food waste.

OzHarvest sees the benefit of this work not only in providing quality food and savings for charitable organisations, but also in saving food donors from substantial costs of sending food waste to landfill as well as reducing the carbon emissions of such waste.

SecondBite

SecondBite is a food rescue organisation that provides South Australians in need with access to fresh, nutritious food. They do so by rescuing and redistributing surplus fresh food, building community capacity in food skills and nutrition, and advocating for an end to food insecurity. SecondBite currently supplies food to over 100 food relief providers in South Australia.

SecondBite sources its stock through donations from wholesalers, retailers, and through a partnership with Coles supermarkets. Coles donates fruit, vegetables, meat and bakery items that do not meet their in-store quality standards, but are still safe and nutritious to eat.

SecondBite has committed to 75% of the food it rescues and redistributes being fresh fruit and vegetables, and 95% of food being nutritious, in line with the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.

Pathway Community Centre

The Pathway Community Centre – operated by the Clovercrest Baptist Church – provides assistance to people in need through charitable food relief, counselling, and budgeting advice. The Community Centre sources food through SecondBite, and through donations from individuals and local retail outlets to support its own food relief activities as well as those of approximately 14 other charitable, religious, and educational organisations in their local area.

Charitable food relief

Many organisations offer food relief as a service, often as part of their wider emergency relief program. Emergency relief aims to support people in financial crisis and typically includes material support such as clothing, transport vouchers, help with the cost of utilities, accommodation and medical expenses, and increasingly, food relief.

Key statistics about the 81 charitable food relief services that responded to the survey are provided in Figure 7.
Figure 7: Charitable food relief key statistics

n = 81

% of agencies that provide food relief in the form of:
- 59% of organisations provide more than one type of food relief

50%
25%
0%

41% reported having difficulty sourcing certain types of in-demand foods, such as:
- fresh fruit and veg
- meat
- milk
- non-perishables
- coffee and tea
- sugar

% of agencies that source food from:
- Foodbank
- Purchased by the organisation
- Donations from individuals/households
- Donations from retail outlets
- OzHarvest
- SecondBite
- Grown by the organisation

64% of services have specific criteria for access
- Evidence of need – eg health care card
- Location – eg postcode
- Restrictions on multiple visits

% of agencies that receive funding from:
- Donations from individuals
- Organisation’s revenue
- Commonwealth Government
- Fundraising
- State Government
- Service club / community group
- Private business
- Philanthropic organisation

% of agencies that reported demand is:
- Increasing
- Steady
- Decreasing
- No response

Clients per week
- < 10
- 10-50
- 50-200
- 200-1000
- > 1000
- Unknown
A large number of services use food relief as a tool to engage clients with other capacity building services, either through direct provision or referral (see Figure 8). However, the survey also found that many agencies neither provide nor refer to such services, representing a potential lost opportunity to engage with vulnerable and disadvantaged clients.

**Figure 8: Provision and referral of capacity building services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Provide</th>
<th>Refer</th>
<th>Neither</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial counselling/budgeting</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case management for multiple support needs</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition education</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn to cook programs</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and education</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship services</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn to grow your own food</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling services</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/dental</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug and alcohol services</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9 shows how often different types of food and drinks are provided through charitable food relief. It can be seen that certain types of food, such as bread, fresh fruit and vegetables, and beans and legumes are provided almost all of the time by many agencies. It is promising to see that these healthy foods are more often available than unhealthier options like sweet and savoury snack foods, however these items are still provided on a regular basis by a number of agencies.

65% of agencies reported having some sort of policy on the type of food provided, with 38% being a formal policy and 62% being informal. Where the details of the policy were provided, 59% referred to nutrition (e.g., stocking as much fresh fruit and vegetables as possible, providing free fresh fruit and vegetables, avoiding excessive unhealthy foods), 21% referred to quality (e.g., not past use-by-date), and 21% referred to cultural appropriateness.
Other complementary food initiatives

- The Food Centre in Gepps Cross provides affordable groceries, clothing and household goods in a grocery shop setting. Food is provided at subsidised costs or donated by food producers and retailers, and rescued from local bakeries and the Adelaide Produce Markets at Pooraka.

- The South Australian Community Foodies program is a statewide peer education program that trains and supports community volunteers (Foodies) to deliver healthy eating education and support to disadvantaged adults and their children (see page 15 for more information). One group of Foodies has worked in partnership with The Food Centre to develop a range of “Easy Feast” healthy meal packs which contain the recipe and ingredients to prepare a healthy family meal for under $8.

- The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that supports food education programs in 132 schools and learning centres in South Australia. The program targets children and their educators, and aims to teach children how to grow and prepare their own food through a curriculum-integrated model, to promote positive food behaviours for life.

Key challenges in the charitable food system

Finally, the survey asked about the main challenges faced by the charitable food sector. Most common were challenges around funding, such as having insufficient or unstable funding to ensure sustainability of the service. Other challenges included:

- recruiting and retaining volunteers;
- accessing a variety of quality, affordable produce;
- reliance on donations of food from individuals, which can be insufficient and unreliable; and
- lack of transport for clients.
Food security roundtable

In August 2017, DCSI and DHA convened a half-day roundtable workshop for a group of approximately 30 of our funded partners, including representatives from the charitable food and community sectors, academic experts from Flinders University, and government representatives from DCSI, DHA, Green Industries SA, and the Department for Environment, Water, and Natural Resources.

The purpose of the roundtable was to:

- understand each other’s role in the charitable food sector;
- clarify what our collective vision is; and
- get a sense of some areas to collaborate on.

The roundtable began with a discussion on the current state of the charitable food system. Attendees were asked to share the main focus of their organisation, and in doing so explored the food security outcomes their role contributed to (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Roles and outcomes in the South Australia charitable food system
Following this, the group worked to identify a number of possible actions that the collaboration could focus on to improve the State’s charitable food system. One such action was to undertake an audit of the charitable food sector, which DCSI and DHA have since completed through the food relief provider survey (see page 17).

Of all the actions proposed, four key focus areas emerged which are explored further on pages 10-15:

1. Creating a collaborative and integrated system with a shared vision
2. Addressing the determinants of food security
3. Building skills and capacity to facilitate independence
4. Improving health and nutrition outcomes
References


