



OC Hunger Alliance

Community Convening

June 13, 2024





Agenda

01. Welcome

02. Introductions & Remarks

03. Food Security, Nutrition, and Access

04. Operational Review

05. OCHA Expansion

06. Wrap up

OCHA Vision

A healthy Orange County community with equitable access to nutritious food.

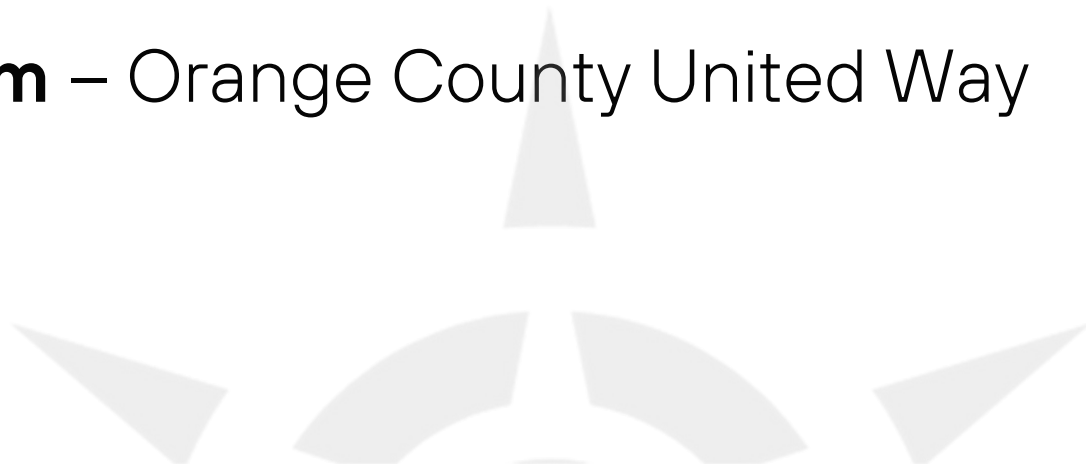
Joint Mission

Optimizing the emergency food system and leveraging food assistance to address root causes of poverty.

OC Hunger Alliance

Supporters

- ❖ **Hieu Nguyen** – OC Health Care Agency
- ❖ **Victoria Torres** – Samueli Foundation
- ❖ **Carol Kim** – Orange County United Way





Food Security, Nutrition, and Access

FOOD SECURITY, NUTRITION, AND ACCESS

1



Methodology

2



Background

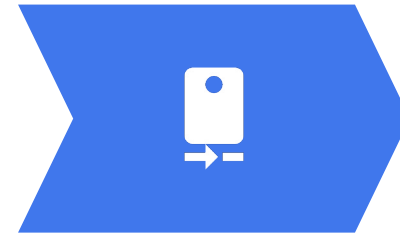
3



Key Findings

Demographics
Utilization
Capacity
Referrals
Unmet Needs
Barriers
Addressing Needs

4



Recommendations

5



Q&A

Methodology: Data Collected/ Presented

- **Literature Review**
- **Publicly Available Data**
- **Surveys**
 - Providers– 189 responses
 - Consumers– 811 responses
- **Focus Groups**
 - 3 with Community (College Students, MENA, Refugee)
 - 3 EiOC Provider Convenings

Methodology: Limitations

- **Accessibility to Public Data**

- Not all data wanted are available
- Lag time between data collected and availability

- **Survey Implementation**

- Collaborated with partners to gather Consumer surveys
 - Responses mostly represent population already receiving services
- Most service providers located in central and north OC
 - Fewer responses in south OC
- Relatively few responses from Black or MENA populations
 - Still representative of proportion of these populations in OC

- **Consumer Focus Groups**

- MENA focus group held; not able to schedule focus group with Black population
- Time constraints

Background

Defining Food Insecurity

A person is food insecure when they lack regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life. This may be due to unavailability of food and/or lack of resources to obtain food

10.4% of the population in Orange County are considered food insecure

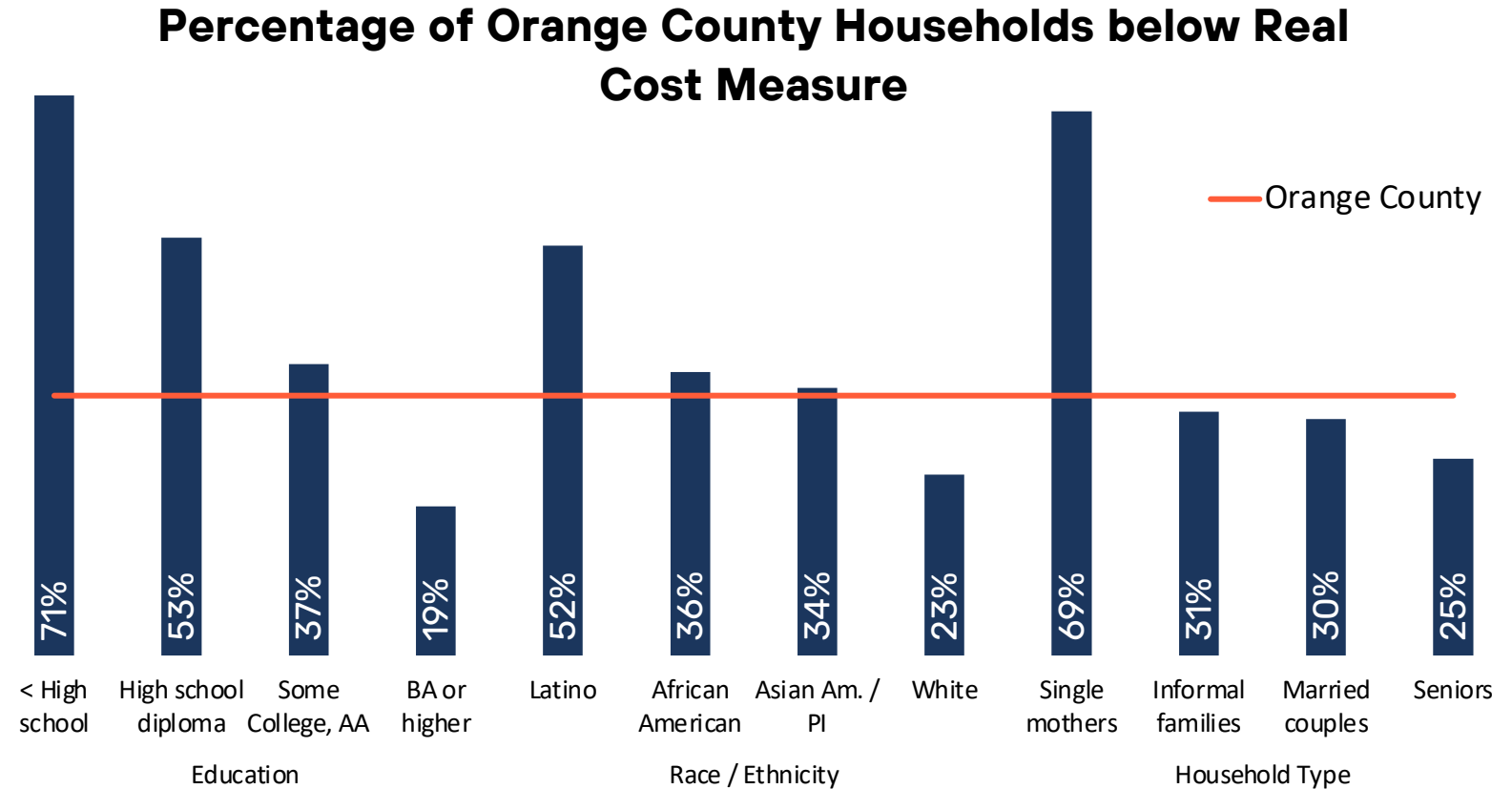
➤ 12.5% of children younger than 18 years

The Consequences of Food Insecurity

- Malnutrition and chronic conditions
- Affects mental health
- Social isolation, stigma, and shame
- Hinders children's ability to learn in school; adults' capacity to work and be effective parents

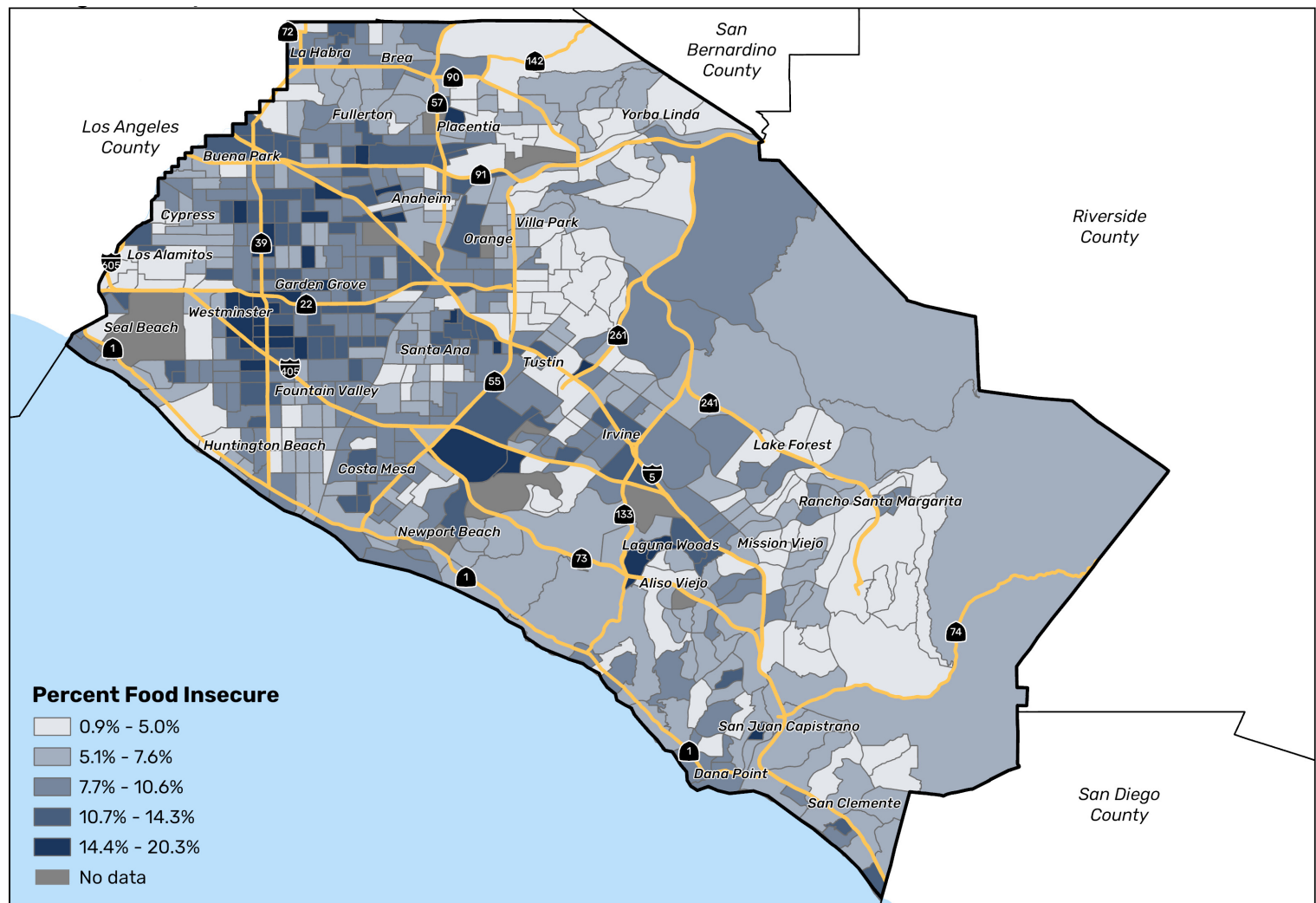
Background: Broader Context

- Benefits cliff
- Expiration of pandemic-era CalFresh benefits
- High cost of living



Source: United Ways of California, 2023

Background: Food Insecure



Percentage of Population Food Insecure Orange County, 2021

Source: Gundersen, C. Strayer, M., Dewey, A., Hake, M., & Engelhard, E. (2023).

Map the Meal Gap 2023, An Analysis of County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2021. Feeding America.



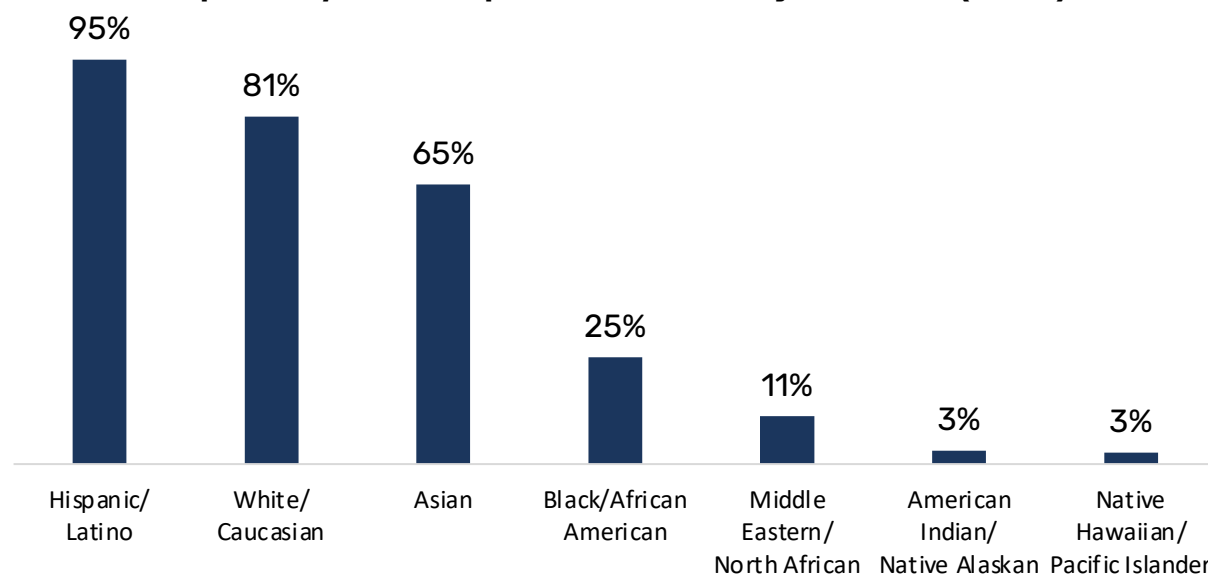
Key Findings

Demographics: Providers

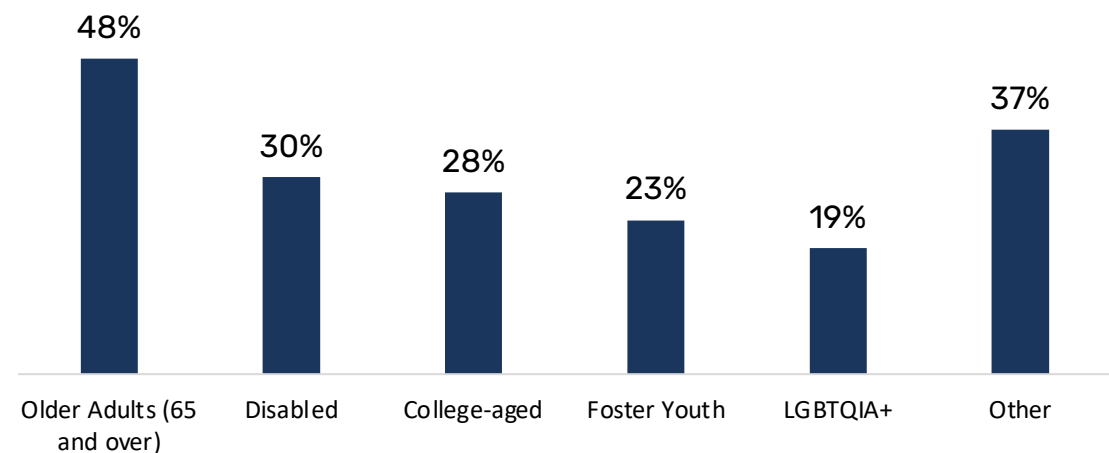
Survey

- 189 surveys from unique organizations
- Top 3 cities served/located in: Santa Ana, Anaheim, and Garden Grove

Top Racial/Ethnic Populations Served by Providers (n=187)



Unique Populations Served (n=167)



EiOC Provider Convenings

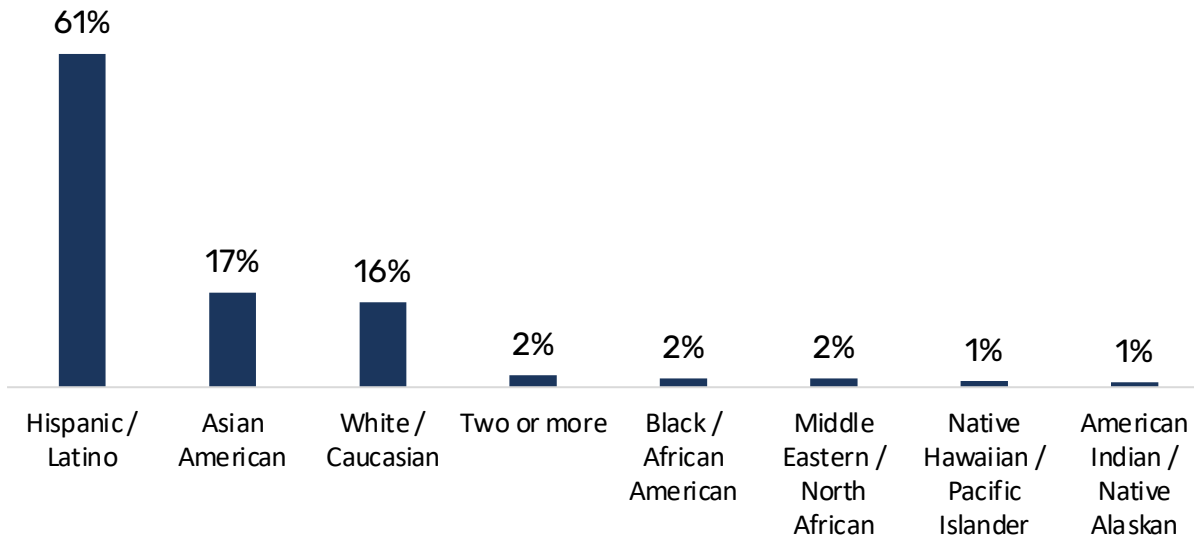
3 listening sessions with voices from CBOs, nonprofits, and government organizations

Demographics: Consumers

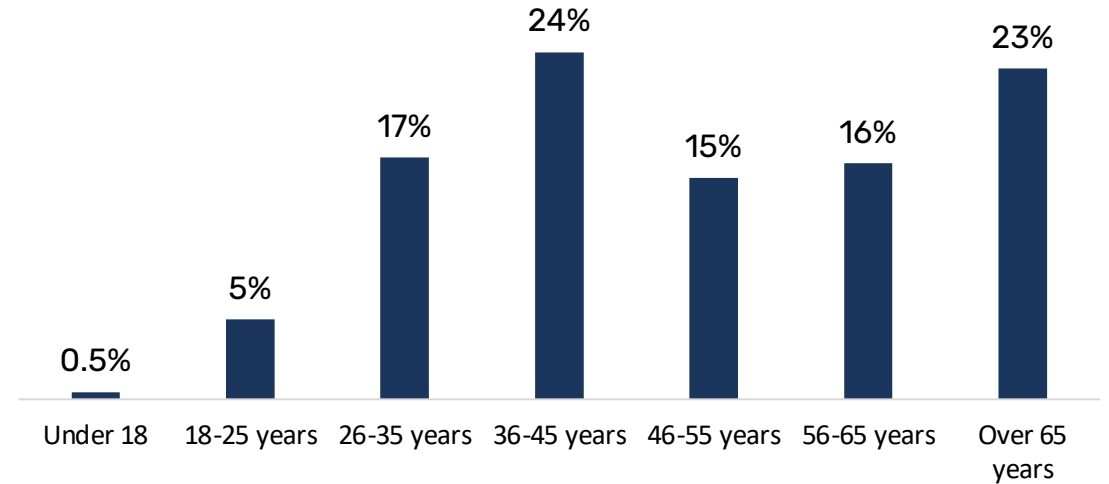
Survey

- 811 Consumer surveys submitted
- Most respondents lived in Santa Ana (30%), Anaheim (20%), and Buena Park (10%)

Race/Ethnicity of Consumers (n=811)



Age Range of Consumers (n=806)



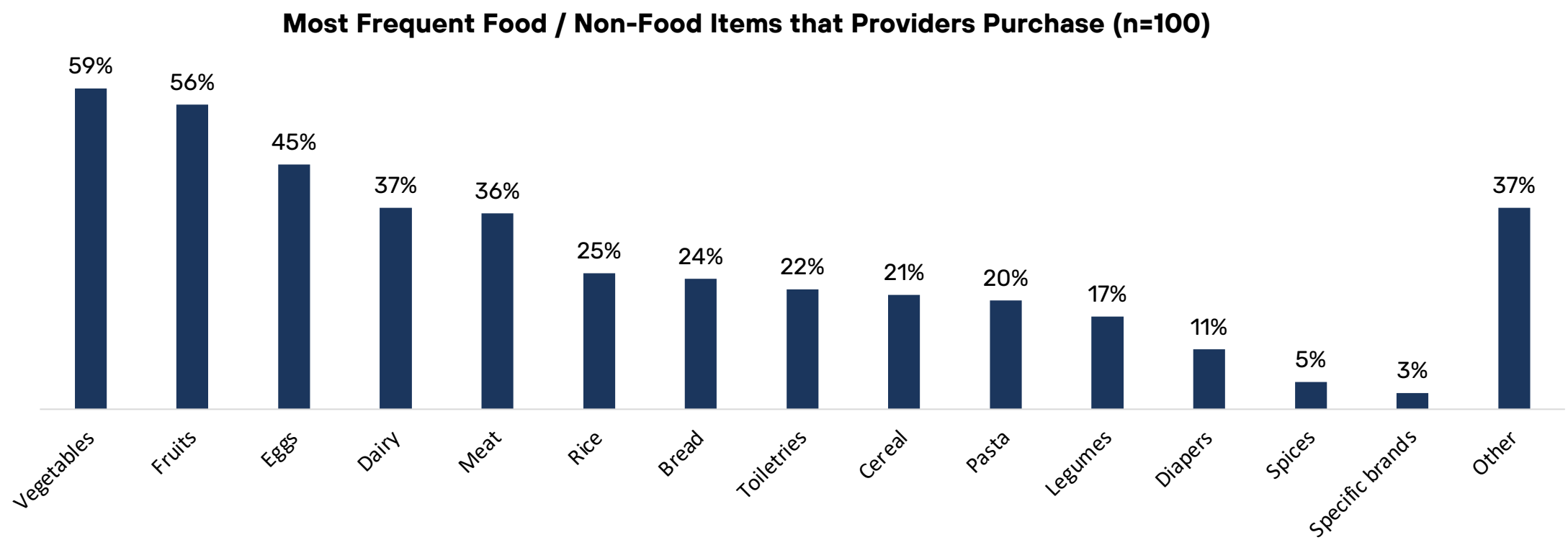
Focus Groups

- 3 focus groups: College-Age, Refugee, and MENA populations
 - Significantly more female than male participants

Utilization: Providers

Providers use Second Harvest and OC Food Bank for food sources

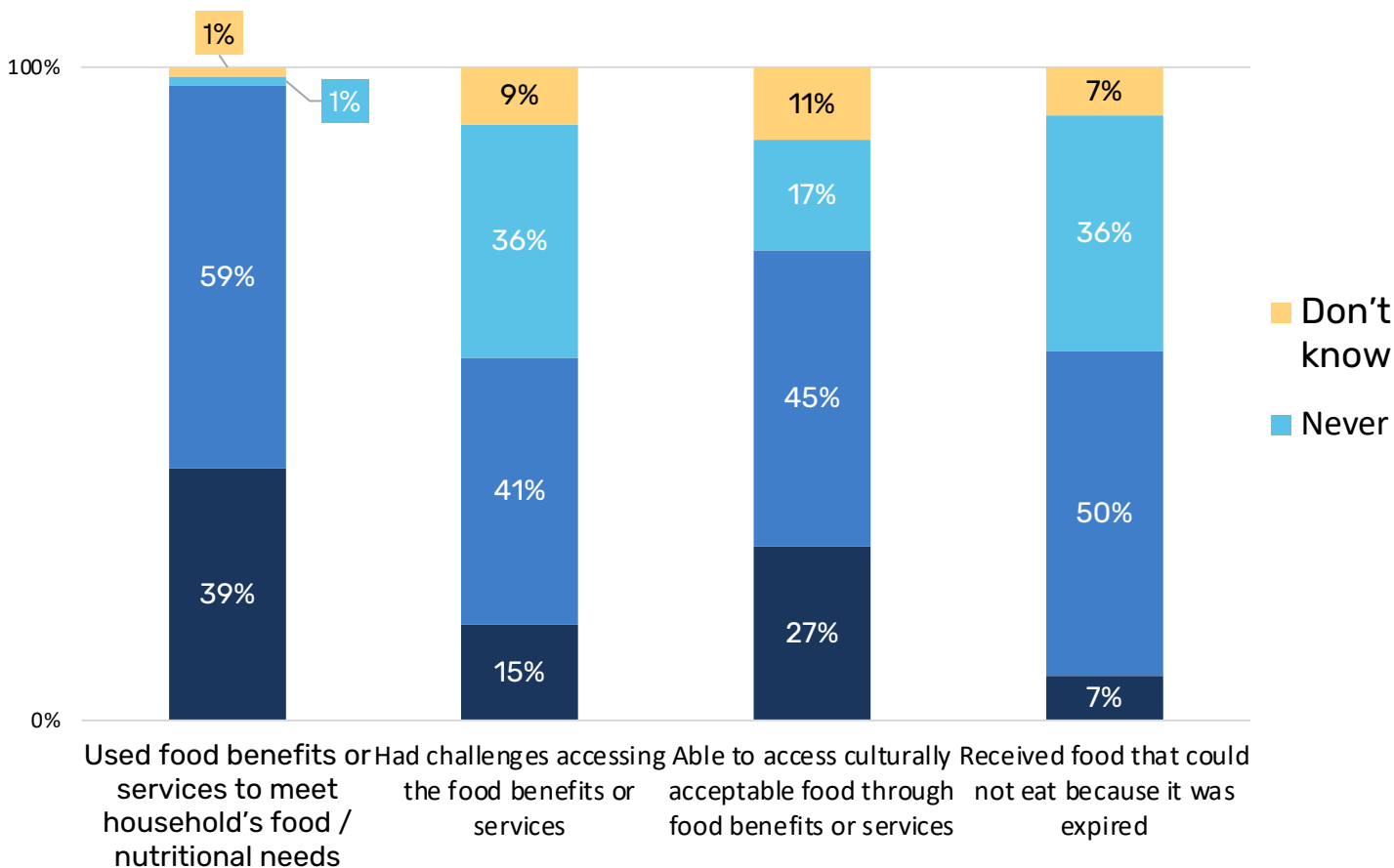
- **70%** of Providers directly distribute food
 - Second Harvest Food Bank and OC Food Bank main sources
 - Providers also need to purchase food and non-food items to meet needs



Utilization: Consumers

More than half of consumers struggle to access benefits and services

Consumer Responses to Statements that, "In the past year..." (n=707)



Food resources used:

- Food pantries (49%)
- CalFresh (28%)
- School provided lunch (20%)
- WIC (14%)

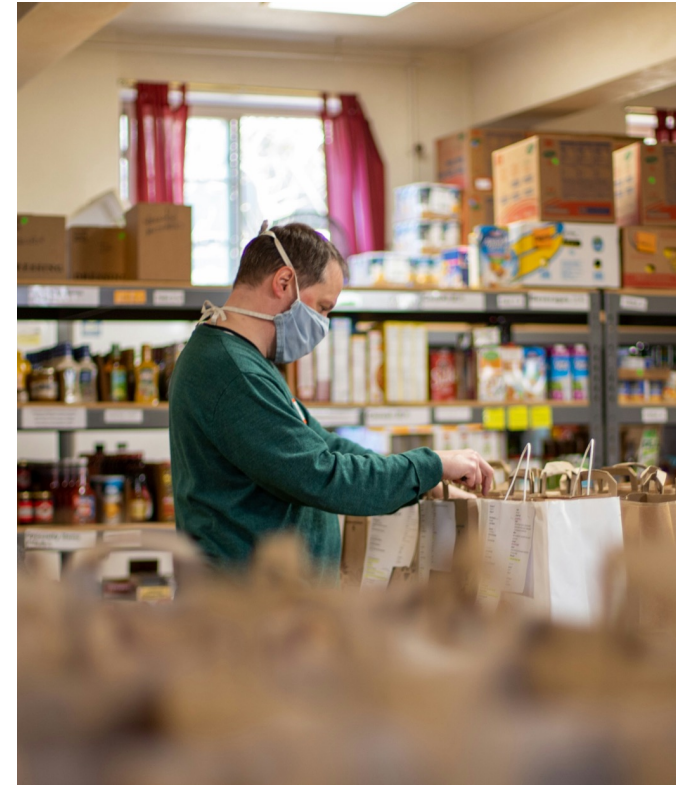
Focus Group Findings

Agreement that access to affordable food, access to nutritious food, and access to affordable housing are necessities that would help create a healthy, food-secure community.

Capacity: Providers

Less than half of food distribution providers allow for food choice

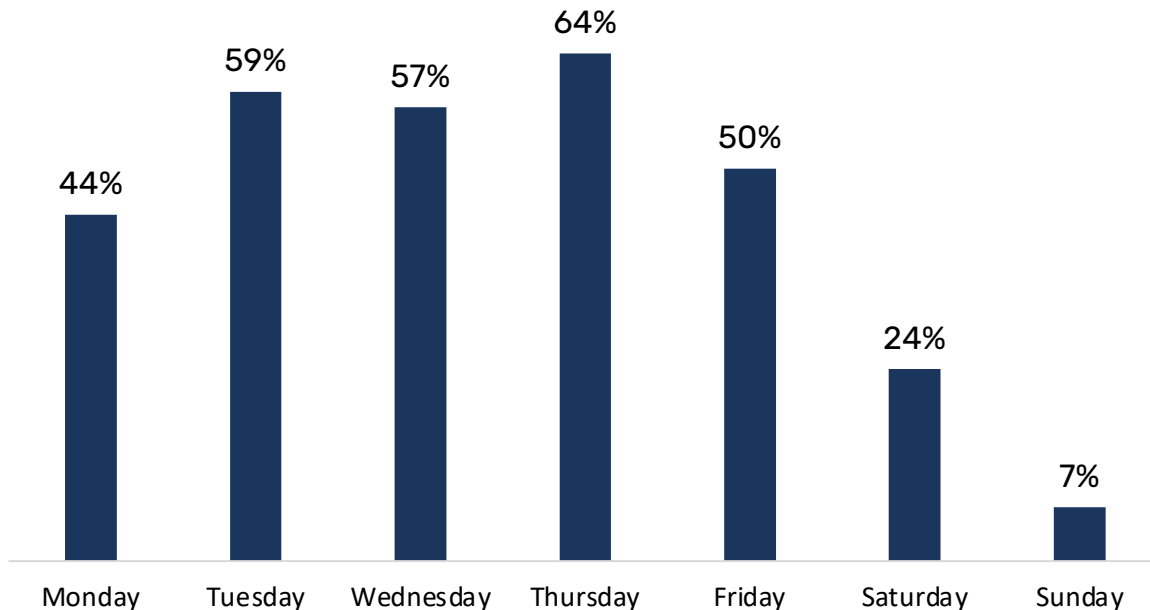
- **70%** able to safely receive, store and distribute food
- **45%** have a food choice model
- **43%** said clientele could receive food weekly
- **26%** serve 1,000+ monthly
- **20%** distribute >13,400 pounds of food monthly



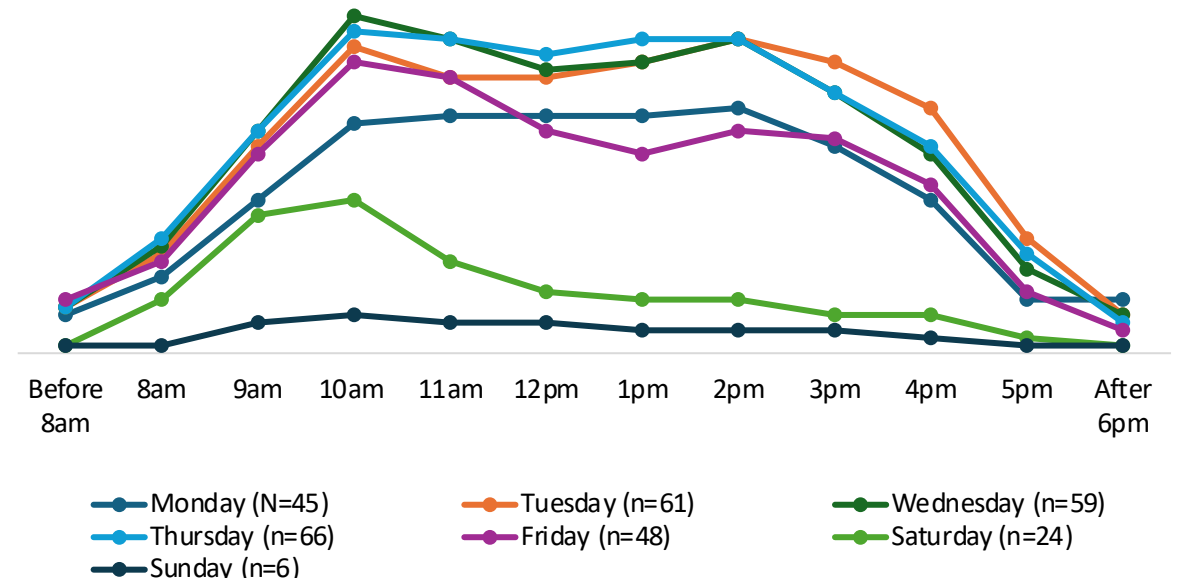
Capacity: Providers (cont)

- Thursday is the day most providers distribute food
- Peak hours of operation is 10:00 am; fewer pantries open before 8:00 am or after 5:00 pm
- 39% operate their refrigerated vehicle 36 hours a week or more

Days of the Week Providers Distribute Food (n=103)



Providers' Hours of Operations by Day (n=103)

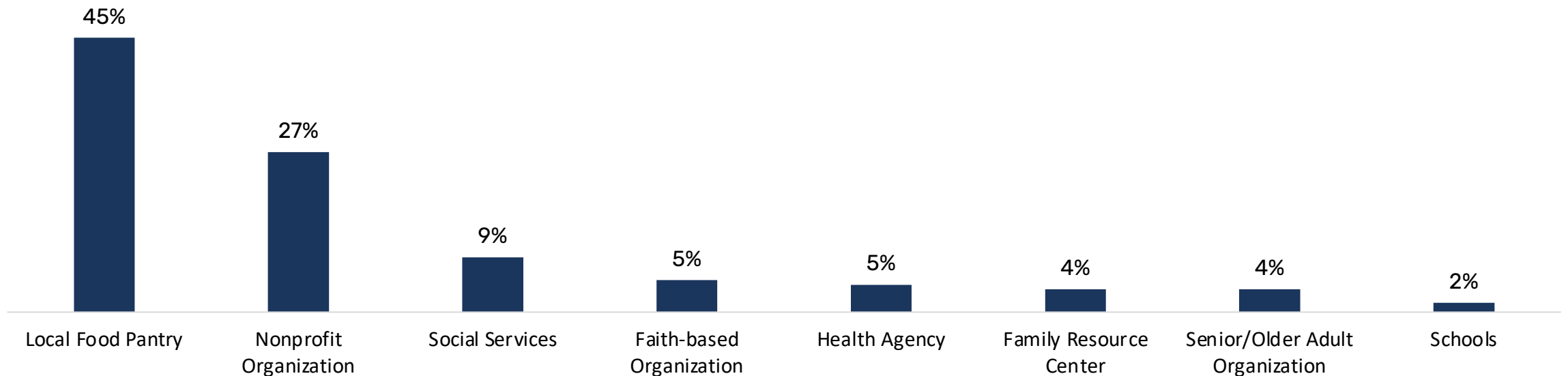


Referrals: Providers

Providers who do not provide direct food support still need to address hunger

- 30% of providers do not distribute food directly, but refer out to other food providers, with local food pantries being the top referral source (45%)

Providers' Top Referral Sources (n=132)



Unmet Needs: Providers

Culturally appropriate food important in effort to reduce waste

EiOC Provider Convenings Findings

- Offering culturally appropriate food:
 - Reduces food waste
 - Promotes dignity
 - Supports access
- Logistics came up frequently as an unmet need:
 - Sourcing
 - Transportation
 - Food storage

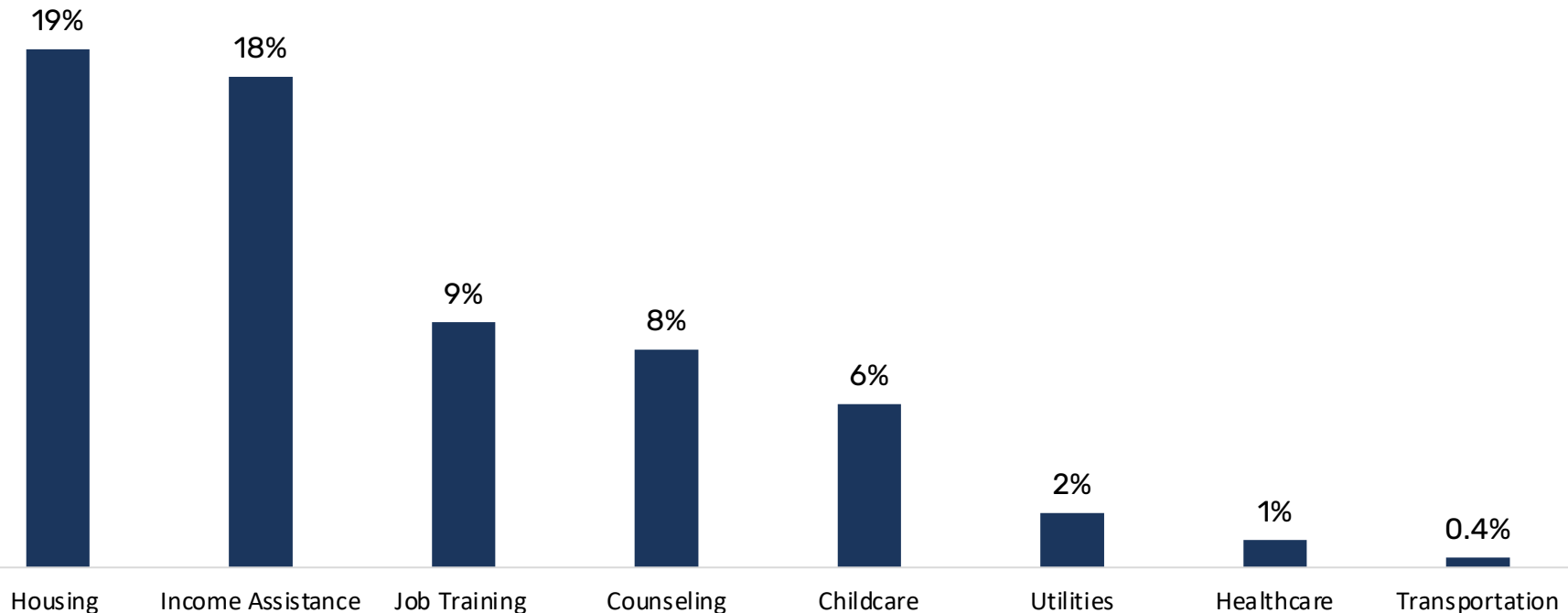


Unmet Needs: Consumers

Affordable food, affordable housing and employment are critical to food security

- 38% of Consumers had services they need but do not know to find
 - Housing and income assistance the top services needed

Services Consumers Need (n=811)



Focus Group Findings

Three themes:

1. Accessibility to affordable food
2. Affordable housing
3. Nutritious food options

Due to the high cost of desired food items, focus group participants must find cheaper food alternatives to balance their expenses

Barrier: Providers

Providers face barriers in distributing nutritious food

1 in 3 indicated supply issues:

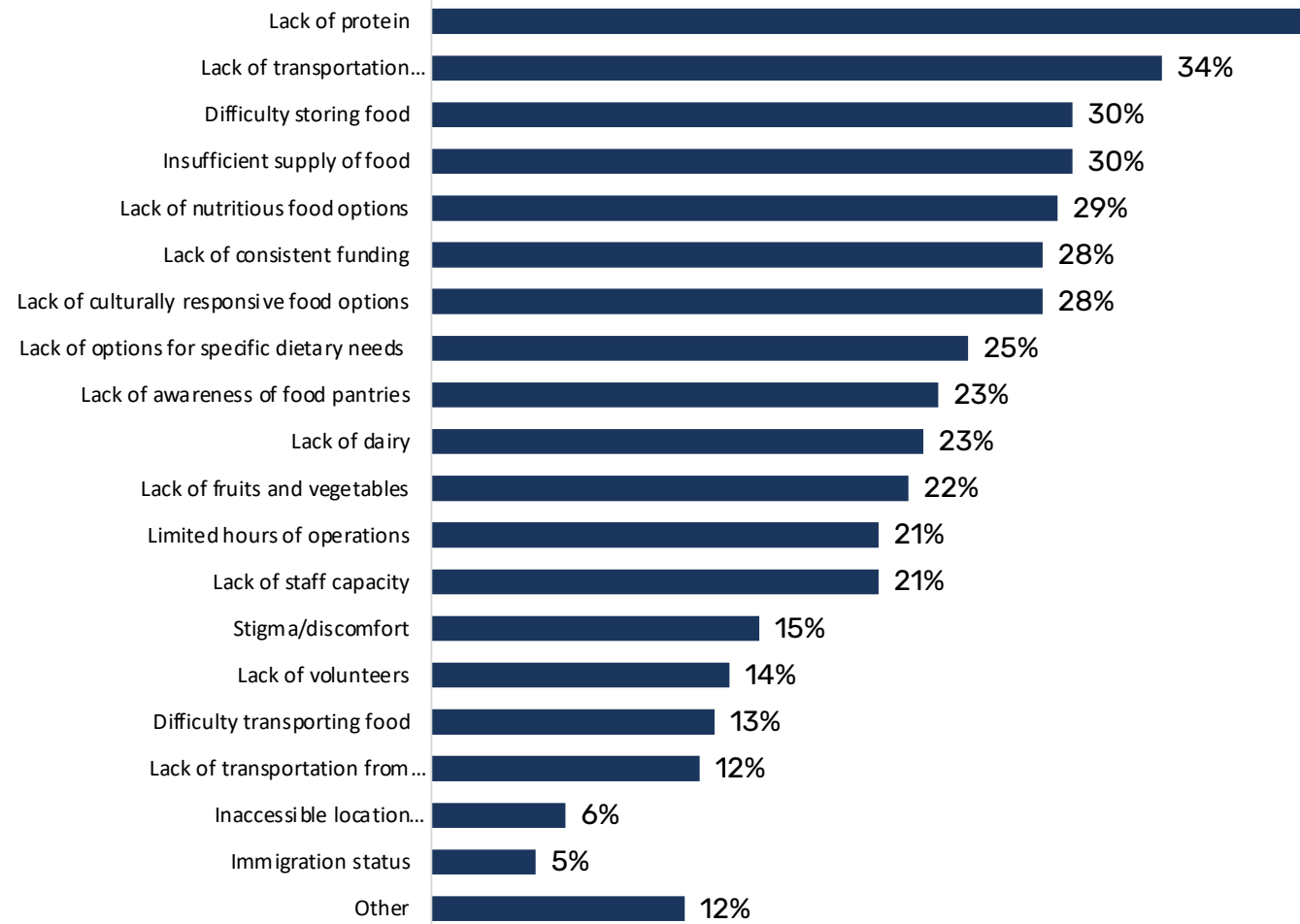
- 29% lack of nutritious food options
- 28% lack of ethnically/culturally responsive food options

EiOC Provider Convenings Findings

Two main barriers:

1. Fear of risking **immigration status**, and
2. Difficulty **signing up for benefits**
 - Participants also noted that shifting demographics are surfacing new challenges

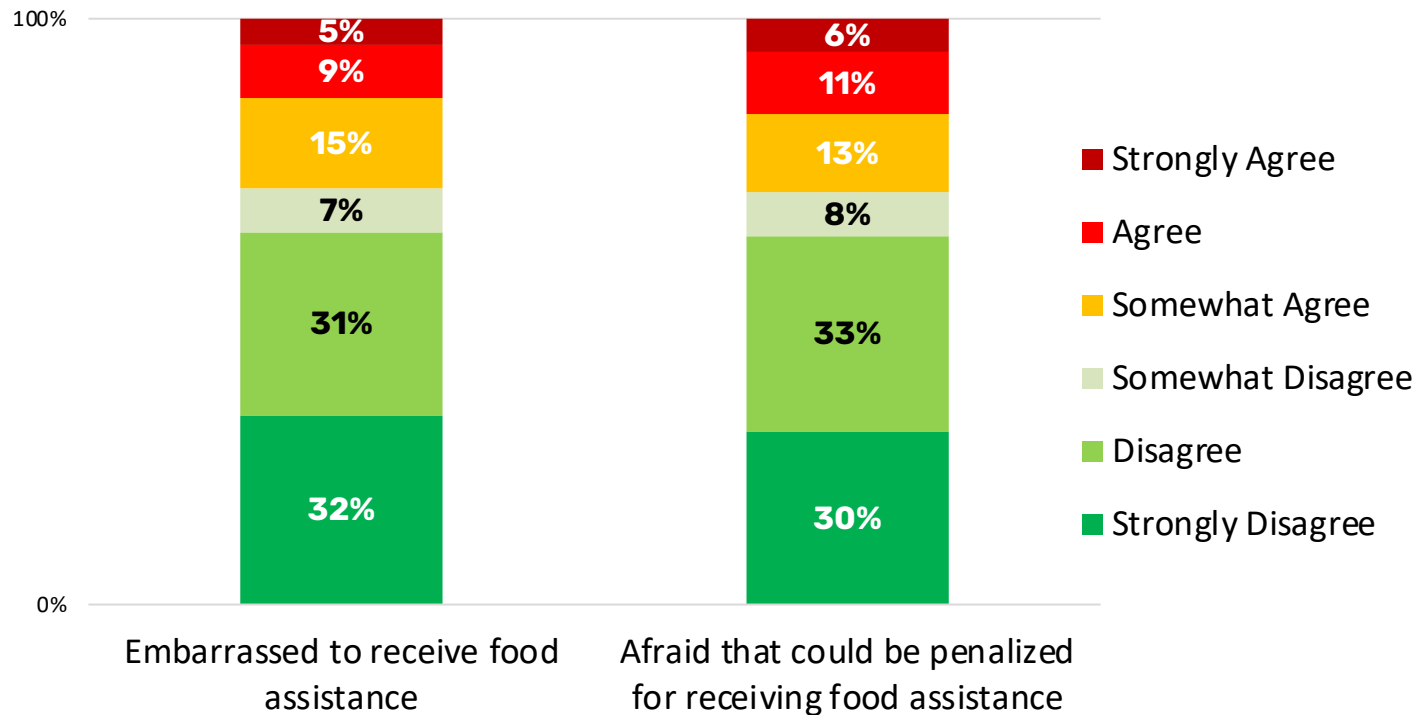
Providers' Top Barriers to Addressing Food Needs (n=145)



Barriers: Consumers

Consumers find immigration status and stigma to be barriers in accessing nutritious food

Percentage of Consumers Who Agree They are Embarrassed to Receive Food Assistance or Afraid of Being Penalized (n=707)



Focus Group Findings

Three main barriers to accessing healthy foods:

- Transportation
- Immigration status and benefits
- Stigma

Addressing Needs: Providers

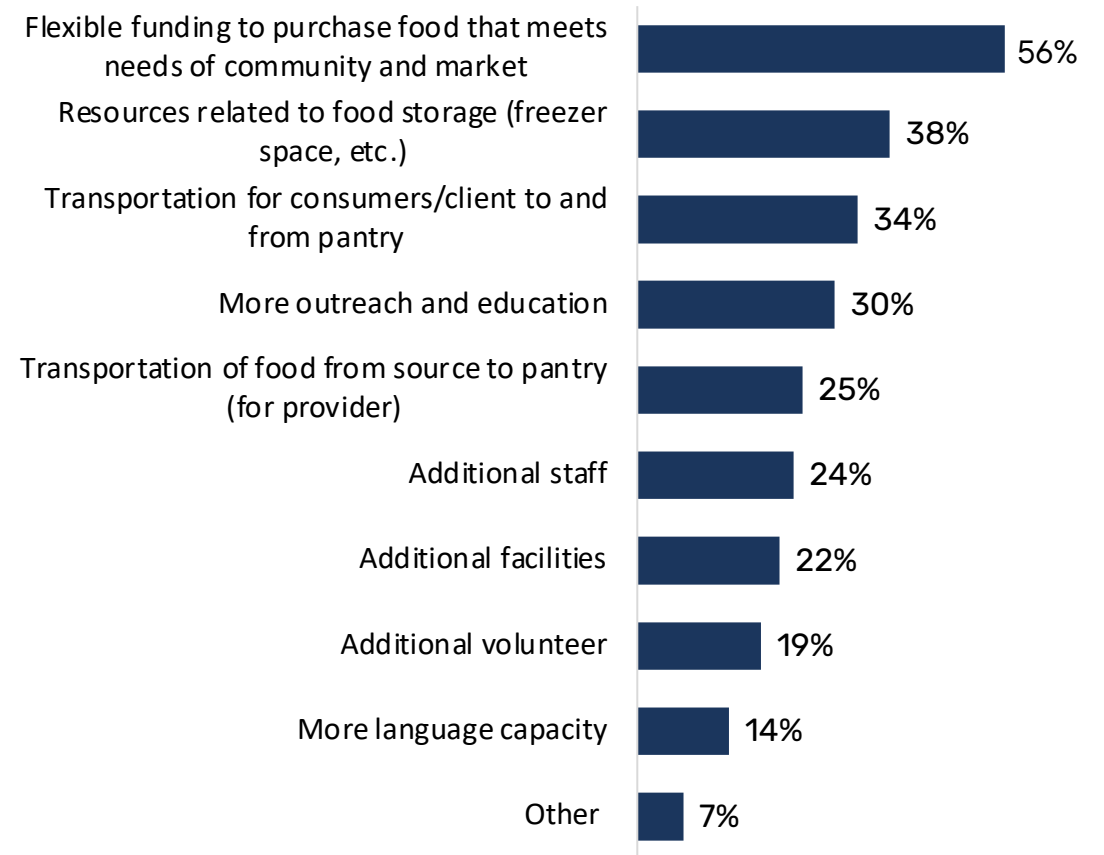
Improvements in funding, storage, transportation and distribution will be critical to addressing the barriers

- Providers' top barrier: needing flexible funding to purchase food (56%)
- 51% of providers think having food delivery apps for paid or volunteer drivers would help in eliminating barriers from pantry to clients' homes

EiOC Provider Convenings Findings

- Need for collaboration with sharing of best practices, resources, and knowledge about where to source additional food when needed.
- Sourcing ethnic food was widely agreed upon as a challenge. Some Providers have addressed this challenge by partnering with small ethnic grocers.

Providers' Top Barriers to Food Access that Can be Addressed (n=143)



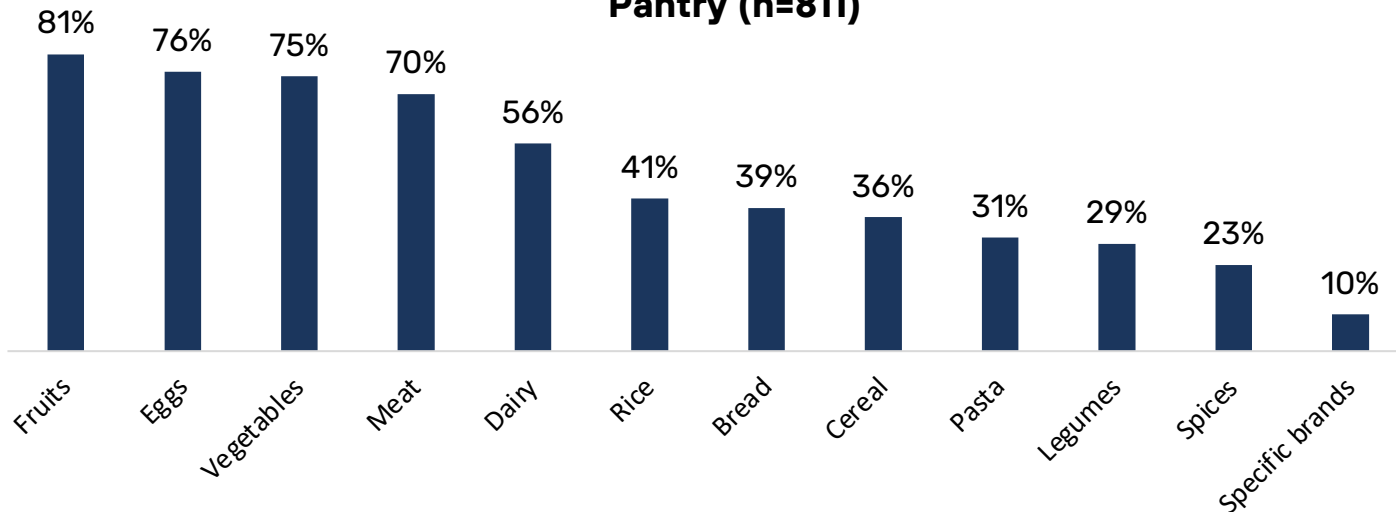
Addressing Needs: Consumers

Improvements in funding, storage, transportation and distribution is critical to addressing barriers

Suggestions for making needed food easier to get:

- 39% food pantry closer to home
- 32% food delivery to their home
- 28% ability to choose foods they want
- 25% different food options
- 16% different operating hours

Foods Consumers Would Like to See More of at Their Food Pantry (n=811)



Consumers would like more fruits, eggs, and vegetables

Focus Group Findings

- **College-age:** implement incentives or discounts for students
- **MENA:** transportation, increase in CalFresh payments, and tailor government programs to individual needs
- **Refugee:** transportation assistance, increase minimum wage, community garden, and translation support



Recommendations

Recommendations I.

Promote Food Choice

Allowing consumers to select their foods will reduce waste while providing access to options based on their health and cultural needs

- Provide healthier food choices
- Awareness of culturally specific foods
- Flexible funding to increase options available

➤ **Inclusion/equity opportunities:** Increase access to culturally familiar foods by engaging ethnic markets and suppliers

Recommendations II.

Champion Food Benefit Awareness and Access

*Improve access to public benefit programs and
remove barriers to food access and services*

Remove barriers to food access and services

- Increase access for non-English speakers:
 - Support clients in navigating the system
 - Availability of translation services and materials in multiple languages
- Explore use of food delivery apps and alternative methods for food distribution

➤ **Inclusion/equity opportunities:** Address transportation challenges with vulnerable populations

Recommendations III.

Champion Food Benefit Awareness and Access (Cont.)

Improve access to public benefit programs for college-aged students

- Connect with institutions serving college students to provide information about federal and local nutrition programs

➤ **Inclusion/equity opportunities:** Develop a coordinated solution for client education and assistance in applying for food programs

Recommendations IV.

Strengthen Systems of Care

Improve collaboration between providers and pantries, improve efficiency in procuring and distributing food, increase food choice

- Strengthen OCHA Steering Committee
- Develop strategic plan to implement report recommendations
- Develop master plan for the region
- Consider community collaborations
- Support food banks and pantries in leveraging economies of scale

➤ **Inclusion/equity opportunities:** Recognize and address structural support to increase access to healthy food choices



Q&A



Operational Review

Regional Distribution Overview

An operational assessment of the Second Harvest Food Bank and Community Action Partnership of Orange County (OC Food Bank) was conducted

- 'Complimentary' locations, sources of food, services provided, and national affiliations
- Over one-third of the county's non-profit food pantries work with both food banks
- Anticipated increased food demand could strain capacity due to logistical requirements
- OC Food Bank's short-term leases restricts the ability to make capital improvements that lead to reduced costs and increased production

Operational Review

Capacity Assessment

The operational assessment identified areas of opportunity to potentially improve capacity and throughput

- OC Food Bank requires additional cooler and freezer space to meet demand
- Utilize updated warehouse equipment to increase productivity in warehouse operations
- Strategic planning should include use of automated storage/retrieval systems to improve efficiency and reduce spoilage
- Expand collaboration to increase vehicle utilization, whereby reducing costs
- Additional **procurement** resources along with utilization of data, technology, and national buying opportunities to improve per/unit costs
- Better training and utilization of **software** to improve efficiencies and productivity
- Adopt best practice for **systemic control**, including KPI, to improve production and throughput



Q&A



OCHA

Expansion

Steering Committee

- Oversight group / executive committee
- Representation from key sectors
- Responsible for coordination of strategic direction, overseeing finances, and ensuring alignment with mission/goals of OCHA
- High level guidance and leadership
- Ensure plan and execution of cross-sector collaboration
- Strategy development and resource coordination
- Oversee backbone support

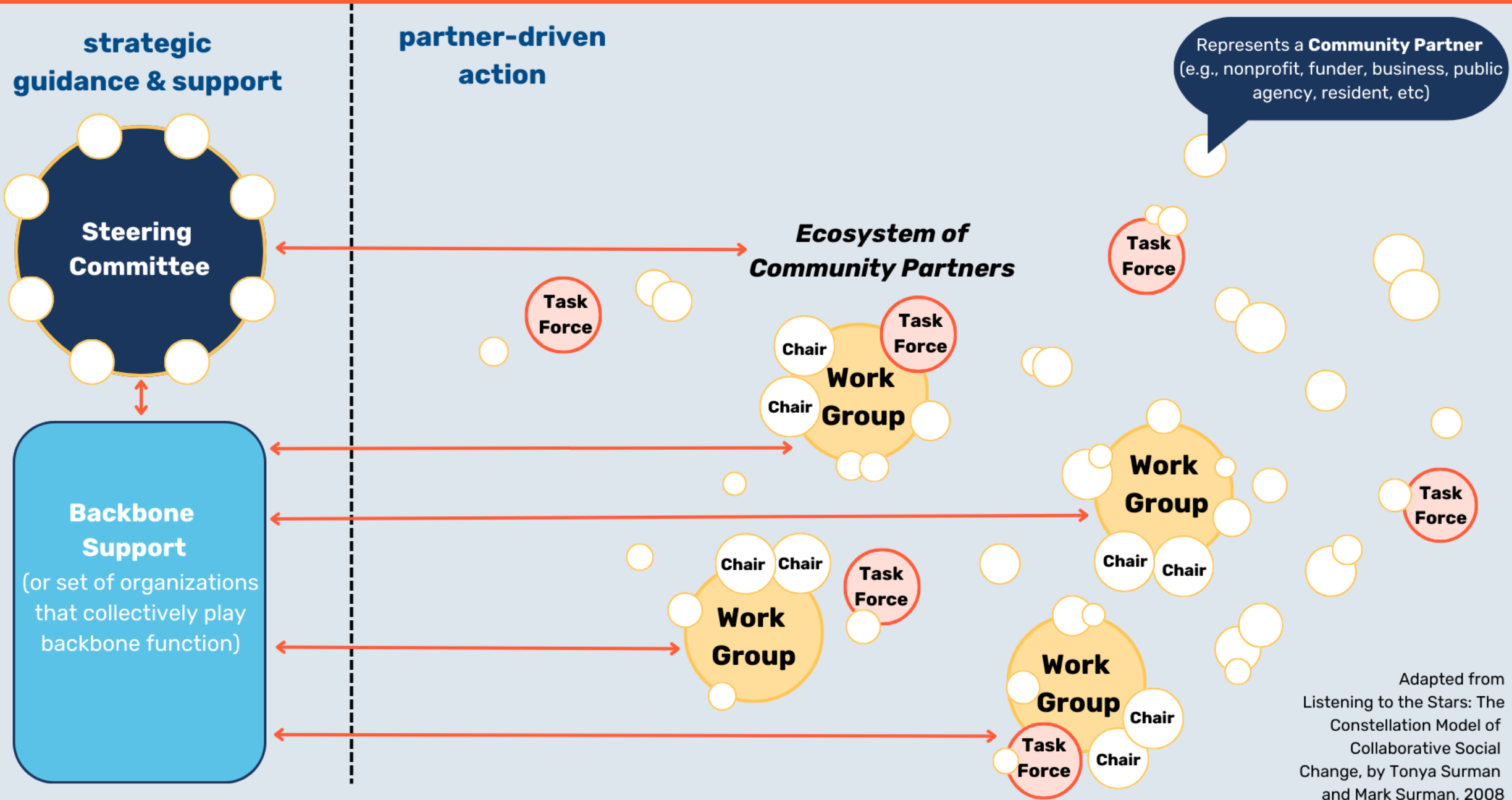
Steering Committee Members

- **Abound Food Care** – Mike Learakos
- **Second Harvest Food Bank** – Claudia Bonilla Keller
- **CAPOC (OC Food Banks)** – Mark Lowry
- **211 OC** – Elizabeth Andrade
- **County of Orange Social Services Agency** – An Tran
- **Meals on Wheels** – Holly Hagler
- **Orange County Grantmakers** – Victoria Torres
- **CalOptima** – Kelly Bruno-Nelson

Steering Committee Priorities

- Form Advisory Committee of diverse stakeholders
- Develop master plan for region
- Develop implementation strategy
- PR campaign and partnership development activities to engage stakeholders
- Research and pursue grant funding

Common Agenda and Shared Metrics





Thank You!