

# Increasing Survey Participation among Neighbors

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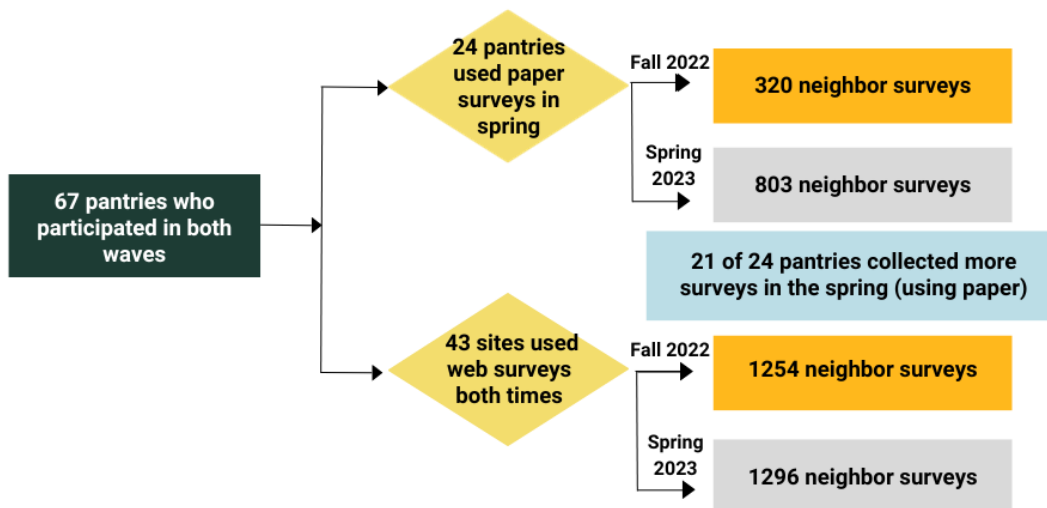
As part of efforts to build equity and inclusion, many food banks and pantries are gathering feedback from the people they serve, referred to here as neighbors, to inform their work. This report **highlights recommendations for increasing participation among neighbors**. In 2022, Feeding America selected 30 partner food banks to increase the amount of choice offered by their partner program sites. The evaluation goal was to measure levels of choice at pantries and assess the impact of offering choice among neighbors visiting the sites.

Neighbors were invited to participate in surveys in fall 2022 and again in spring 2023, to explore changes in their experience at the pantry. The surveys were available in English and Spanish, and participants received a \$10 gift card. In the fall, we used web-based surveys accessed through QR codes or shortened URLs. We heard feedback from several food bank staff that the electronic survey was not accessible for all neighbors. Based on this feedback, we introduced changes to the process in the spring, including allowing sites to choose between paper or web-based surveys.

*“We asked them for feedback that would help us better understand what barriers might have prevented families from participating, and what we heard was primarily related to technology. Since the neighbor surveys were only available online, parents had to have access to a computer or tablet plus a reliable Internet connection. The rural communities that these schools are located in often have unreliable internet service.” – Food bank staff*

**Offering both web-based and paper options increased the total number of surveys completed.** Sites that chose paper surveys had slightly higher average completed surveys compared with pantries offering web surveys (33 surveys per pantry vs. 30 surveys per pantry respectively). 24 sites participated in the fall using web surveys, then participated in the spring using paper surveys. They had an increase from 320 to 803 surveys, a 151% increase. Among the 67 pantries that participated in both surveys, there was a 33% increase in participation.

## Paper vs Web Responses



Among common 67 pantries, increased from 1574 to 2099 surveys

*“Having the surveys printed in English and Spanish and having staff from the food bank on hand to explain the process and the incentive was very helpful to have a successful second round.” – Food bank staff*

## Key findings:

There is a high capacity for food pantries to use web-based surveys, such as via QR codes and shortened URLs.



However, lack of technology was a barrier to participation, including access to email and wi-fi for neighbors.



Using only one type of survey risks over or underrepresenting certain demographic groups:

- Respondents who were White or Black were more likely to submit a paper survey
- Respondents who were Hispanic/Latino were less likely to submit a paper survey



**In the future, it would be beneficial to allow sites to use a combination of paper and online surveys to increase accessibility.** Offering multiple survey types allows for more neighbors to share their voice.

*“The neighbor data collection went smoothly, and we were extremely pleased with the changes that the team made to be able to offer hard copy gift cards to neighbors, as well as offering the opportunity for sites to utilize a written survey.” – Food bank staff*

## Recommendations:

1. To increase participation across demographic groups such as age and ethnicity, surveys should be offered in multiple languages and use both web and paper formats
2. Providing incentives for neighbors, with either electronic or actual gift card, can help increase participation and should be prioritized
3. Food banks should look for opportunities to support neighbor feedback collection such as by providing staff to distribute surveys or providing funding for gift cards
4. Findings from surveys should be shared back with the pantry sites and also with neighbors
5. For future research, it would be helpful to analyze differences between paper and web-based surveys in rural, urban versus suburban locations



In collaboration with:

