



8 Steps to Engaging Neighbors with Lived/Living Experience in a Food Pantry Setting

Many food banks and pantries are interested in gathering information from or engaging with the people they serve. The following are suggestions for engaging those with lived/living experience with food insecurity.

1

Create a Welcoming Culture of Inclusion

Create a welcoming and safe environment that supports open communication across diverse perspectives. Embrace diversity, equity and inclusion as core values.

2

Host Accessible Events

Plan logistics for neighbor engagement events with neighbors in mind. When planning events or meetings make sure to consider more accessible times and days of the week that include evenings and weekends so more individuals have the opportunity to join.

3

Create Opportunities for Neighbor Engagement

Design opportunities for neighbors to share their perspectives and influence decisions by collecting feedback in the form of interviews, listening sessions, and/or surveys.

4

Eliminate Barriers to Participation

Ensure no one has to pay to participate by offering transportation, food, and/or childcare at neighbor engagement events.

5

Pay Neighbors for Their Time and Expertise

Compensate neighbors for their participation in meetings or events by offering gift cards or cash.

6

Take Time to Build Trust

Build trust through open communication by letting neighbors know that their voices have been heard and how you are responding to their feedback.

7

Include Neighbor Voices in the Decision Making Process

Create opportunities for neighbors to offer their feedback and use it to influence decisions at the food bank or pantry level, for example, through neighbor advisory groups.

8

Create Positive Feedback Loops

Engage with neighbors regularly to ensure they continue to have the opportunity to advocate for the things that are most important to them.